

KOINONIA

The Princeton Theological Seminary Graduate Forum

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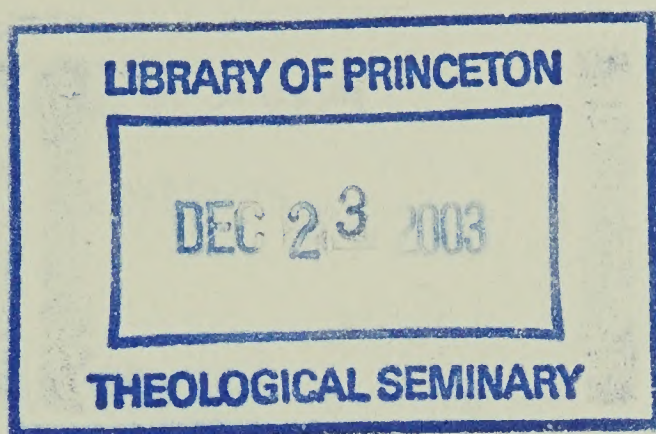
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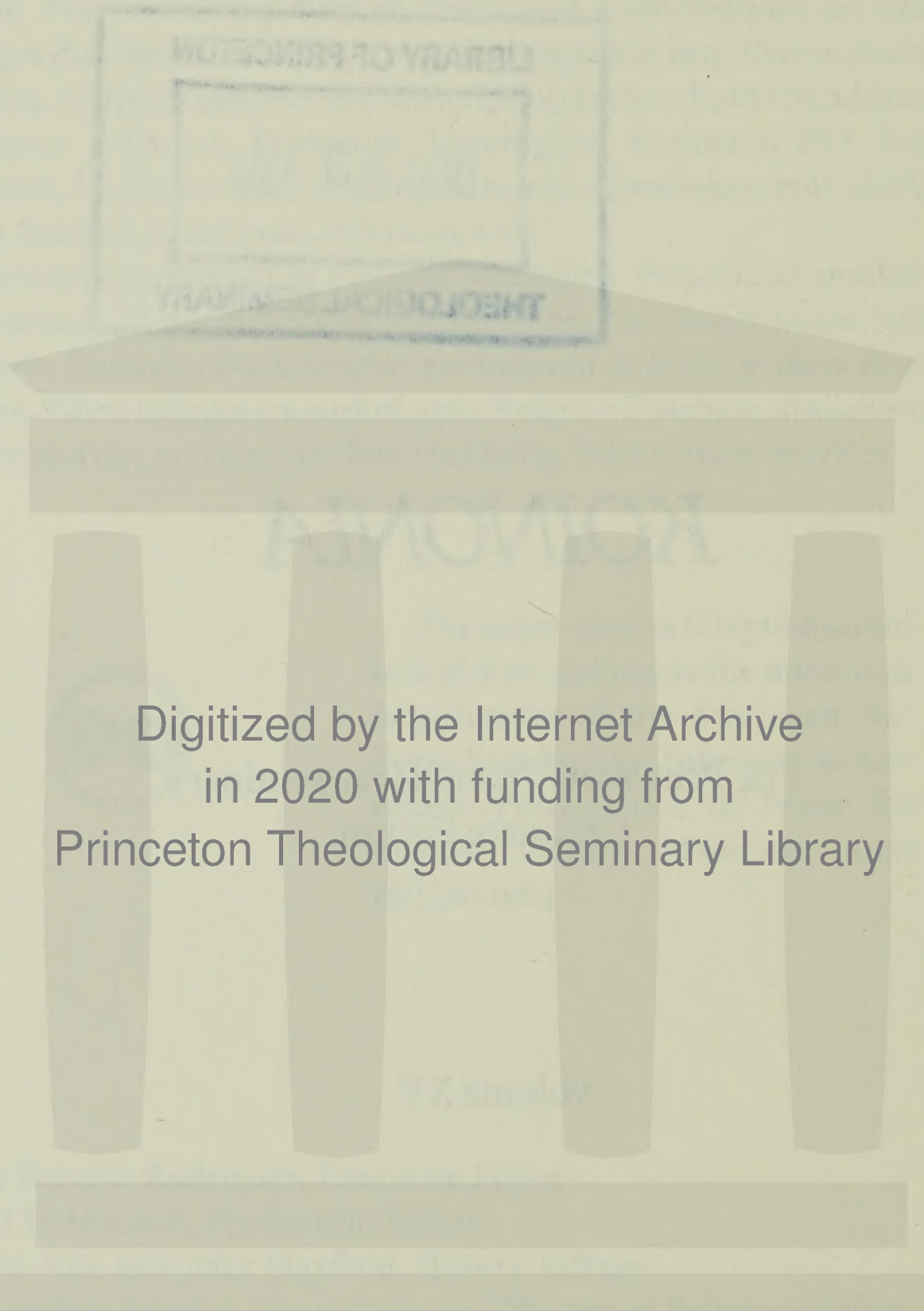


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EDITORIAL

This issue of *KOINONIA* marks yet another transition in the life of the journal. Perhaps it is the very nature of a student-run publication to be in a state of constant change. Nonetheless, it is our hope as an editorial board that this latest transition only serves to strengthen the journal as a peer review publication run by-and-for graduate students in theology and religion. Institutional budget restraints threatened the existence of this publication; one solution was to become an on-line publication. We went another way...you hold in your hands the new “fatter” format for *KOINONIA*, now published once a year but containing two issues worth of content! Previously, the Editorial Board published the central essay and several responses presented at *KOINONIA*’s Fall Forum in the spring issue of the journal and published an open issue each fall. Now we are publishing the Fall Forum essays, 3-4 open submissions, and 15-20 book reviews, all at the cost of printing one issue. Our decision was financially motivated yet driven by our commitment to publish a quality print publication of interest to students and scholars in theology and religious studies. In keeping with the mission of *KOINONIA*, all essays are selected based upon their exploration of original and interesting subject matter in the study of religion and on their potential for interdisciplinary dialogue.

A transition of lesser note is the end of my two-year term as Executive Editor. It has been a time of personal, institutional, and global change, and as I say good-bye to all my colleagues at Princeton Theological Seminary, I hope I am remembered as a faithful steward of *KOINONIA*’s multi-cultural and interdisciplinary mission. I want to thank all the members of the Editorial Board for their long hours and diligent editing, most especially our new Production Editor, Everett Mitchell, who practically trained himself, single-handedly managed the office, and laid out the issue beautifully! It is easy to leave knowing that the journal’s future is in good hands...

The issue begins with our 2002 Fall Forum centerpiece essay, “The Challenge of Yogacara to David Tracy’s Epistemology,” by David Brockman. The author argues that David Tracy undermines his commitment to religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue by granting epistemological preference to linguistic manifestations of divine revelation, a position that appears “to contradict claims made by Mahayana Buddhism that the experience of awak-

ening to enlightenment occurs outside language” (1). Mr. Brockman defends Buddhist claims for extra linguistic experience and then suggests a reading of Tracy’s epistemology as a kind of “skillful means” (*upaya*) more in tune with extra linguistic realities. In response, Rachel Baard in “The Dialectics of Language and Experience in David Tracy’s Epistemology,” contends that Mr. Brockman’s reading of Tracy could use some fine-tuning, and employs George Lindbeck’s descriptive categories to suggest that Tracy does affirm experience as “prior to conceptualization or symbolization” (23). Ms. Baard also highlights David Tracy’s conversation with Buddhist thought, especially his most recent “apophatic turn” and appreciation for radical Christian mystics.

The Fall Forum conversation continues in Manuel Mejido’s response, “The Real Beyond Language,” in which he suggests that the central problem in Brockman’s essay—how are we to understand Tracy’s claim that “all understanding is linguistic through and through”—does not address the more fundamental problematic: “namely, that Tracy fails to consistently differentiate between the ‘linguistic-turn’ and ‘hermeneutics’” (35). Simply put, at stake is the naïve presumption of Western philosophical thought that posits “inter-religious dialogue” as a universally desired goal. Our forum concludes with a response by Jonathan Seitz, “Yes, There are Limits to Tracy’s Linguistic Emphasis; But We Can Only *Talk* About Them,” in which the author argues that David Tracy is well aware of the limitations of language and yet cannot escape language as the sole means available to human beings for communicating the incommunicable. No wonder Tracy has opted for the apophatic/mystical route! To paraphrase Ludwig Wittgenstein, that which we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.

The second section of every issue in our new format will include open submissions in all areas of the academic study of religion; the current issue contains one submission in each of the following departments: History, Old Testament, and Religion & Society. We begin with an interesting exploration of a prevalent phenomenon in 19th century American Protestant popular religion—pilgrimages to the Holy Land—by Stephanie Stidham-Rogers entitled “American Protestant Pilgrimage: Nineteenth Century Impressions of Palestine.” Ms. Stidham-Rogers studies pilgrim narratives of the 19th century in order to demonstrate how these pilgrims’ accounts of the Holy Land have more in common with their own personal and political perspectives than with the distant biblical past. Next G. Brooke Lester presents, “Admiring Our Savvy Ancestors: Abraham’s and Jacob’s Rhetoric of Negotiation

(Gen 23, 33),” a piece of exegesis that creatively makes sense of deceitful rhetoric uttered by Old Testament patriarchs as negotiation techniques not outright duplicity. Finally, Raimundo Barreto makes an invaluable contribution to Protestant liberation thought in Latin America with his article, “Christian Realism and Latin American Liberation Theology,” in which he brings the Christian realism of Reinhold Niebuhr into conversation with Latin American liberation theology. Mr. Barreto traces the influence and reception of Christian realism in Latin America, compares and contrasts Christian realism and liberation theology on sin, power, love and justice, and concludes that both approaches complement one another as models of Christian emancipatory public theology.

As always, the issue ends with our book review section. As editor I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to remind our readers that we are always in need of reviewers and that the editorial board always welcomes submissions on a variety of topics related to theology and religion. I apologize for publication delays—this issue was interrupted by the birth of my daughter Isabella Mercedes Rosario-Blake!—and hope that all future transitions in *KOINONIA* only bring good tidings. Peace.

—Rubén Rosario Rodríguez
Executive Editor

“Linguistic Through And Through”?

The Challenge Of Yogâcâra To David Tracy’s Epistemology¹

David R. Brockman

ONE OF DAVID TRACY’S MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS HAS BEEN TO OPEN UP SPACE FOR interreligious dialogue as a sincere and mutually transformative encounter with the “other.” To this end, he has argued for a radically “hermeneutical turn” in theology, an approach modeled upon conversation. However, Tracy’s theological methodology is founded upon radical claims about the nature of reality, experience, and understanding. These claims are summed up in the following two passages from his *Plurality and Ambiguity*:

Every time we act, deliberate, judge, understand, or *even experience*, we are interpreting (emphasis mine, 1987:9).

What we discover...is that *all understanding is linguistic through and through*....There are no pure ideas free of the web of language. There are no pure messages (emphasis mine, 43).

While Tracy strives for openness to other traditions, statements such as these appear directly to contradict claims made by Mahâyâna Buddhism that the experience of awakening to enlightenment occurs outside language.

This paper examines the workability of David Tracy’s epistemology by evaluating it in light of the Yogâcâra Buddhist vision of the relationship between language and experience, as represented by the teachings of Asanga and Dharmapâla. My aims are (1) to make explicit the epistemological assumptions underlying Tracy’s theological methodology; (2) to highlight the apparent conflict between Tracy and Yogâcâra over the nature of reality,

1. I wish to thank Dr. Ruben L. F. Habito of Perkins School of Theology, SMU, for his comments on this paper.

experience, and understanding; and (3) to explore possibilities for reconciling the two positions.²

PART 1: TRACY'S THEOLOGICAL PROJECT AND ITS EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Dealing Constructively with a Pluralistic Context

David Tracy's theological project can be seen as an ongoing attempt to deal positively and constructively with what he calls "our radically pluralistic moment" (1981:447). This laudable preoccupation is evident in the prevalence of forms of the word "pluralism" in his major titles: *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (1975); *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (1981); *Talking About God: Doing Theology in the Context of Modern Pluralism* (1983); and *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (1987). Tracy sees as an unavoidable reality the radical pluralism of theologies—"a pluralism that suggests a seemingly indeterminate creativity of interpretation," "indeed an intense conflict of interpretations, from which there can often seem no honourable exit" (Tracy 1989:36).

Religious pluralism has been viewed by some Christians as a threat to traditional Christian verities, the proper response to which is either to "dig in" and resist from entrenched positions, or to make a more sophisticated, postliberal attempt to "absorb the world."³ Tracy, on the other hand, opposes theological understandings that privilege confessional positions. "Christianity, he says, must not become 'no more than a set of personal preferences and beliefs making no more claim to either publicness or universality than the Elks Club'" (Placher 1989:156). Tracy considers the privileging of a confessional stance to be a kind of reductionism as objectionable as

2. N.B.: In his translation of Dharmapāla's *Sataka Commentary* (Keenan 1997), John P. Keenan encloses his own amplifications and clarifications in square brackets ([and]). In order to distinguish my editorial comments, which are enclosed in square brackets, from Keenan's clarifications, I have converted the latter to braces ({ and }). In other words, editorial comments enclosed in square brackets are mine; comments in braces are Keenan's.

3. For an entrenched position vis-à-vis other faiths, see Geivett and Phillips 1995:213-45. For the classic postliberal statement, see Lindbeck 1984.

that attempted by secularist critics of religion. What confessionalist reductionism assumes is that “Anything different, other, alien must clearly be untrue and impossible” (Tracy 1987: 100).

In contrast, Tracy sees the encounter with the “different, other, alien” as a liberating opportunity:

We find ourselves...with a plurality of interpretations and methods. We find ourselves with diverse religious classics among many religious traditions. We find ourselves glimpsing the plurality within each tradition while also admitting the ambiguity of every religion: liberating possibilities to be retrieved, errors to be criticized, unconscious distortions to be unmasked (112).

Echoing Paul Ricoeur,⁴ Tracy approaches pluralism as a field of play. Dialogue with other faith traditions is the play itself, the means for growth, enrichment, and new understandings. Thus Tracy believes that pluralism can enrich, rather than threaten, the search for religious truth. With refreshing humility, he testifies to the “liberating transformation” of his own Christian beliefs that has come about through his own dialogue with Buddhism. Tracy writes: “What little, painfully little, I understand of the Buddhist notion of compassion, I understand through my own experience of compassion—an experience formed through my concrete involvement in my own religious and cultural heritages. I recognize that my focal meaning for compassion is likely to receive a liberating transformation through genuine contact and conversation with the Buddhist traditions” (1981:451).

TRACY’S THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

Tracy’s contribution so far has been less in constructive theology than in proposing a methodology for doing theology in a pluralistic context. His methodological proposals serve to open a space in which Christian scripture and doctrine can be creatively reevaluated in light of the fact of pluralism (both within Christianity itself and at the interface with other religions) and in a way that allows for mutual respect between dialogue partners.

Though Tracy has labeled his approach “revisionist” theology, Werner G. Jeanrond prefers to group Tracy under the category of “correlational theology,” a contemporary movement which takes its cue from Paul Tillich. There

4. See, for example, Ricoeur 2000:340-44.

are three main aspects to Tracy's correlational method. First, it is bi-directional in the sense of true "conversation"—a metaphor Tracy employs frequently. Unlike Tillich, Tracy "insists on a *mutually* critical correlation" between Christian and non-Christian sources. Tracy's method "is both critical and self-critical, ... [and] listens to the other as other without attempting to subordinate the conversation partners to one's own agenda" (Jeanrond 1998:139). Secondly, Tracy's method privileges two sources for Christian theology: "Christian texts" and "common human experience and language" (Tracy 1975:43).

A third aspect of Tracy's method—and the most important for this paper—is that it is radically hermeneutical, stressing the centrality to theology of ongoing interpretation of religious texts and human experience. Jeanrond notes that, for Tracy, "no form of theology and no theological method can ever be considered final; all theology is in constant need of re-interpretation and refinement through critical conversation" (Jeanrond 1998:140). Thus theology is for Tracy an essentially interpretive project. The interpretive task is not limited to religious texts alone; the theologian must also interpret the situation in which she finds herself: "In keeping with the demand that a theological position appeal to some analysis of the contemporary situation, all theologians are also involved in...interpreting or defining the religious dimension of the situation" (Tracy 1983:6). This second "constant" in the theological task obliges the theologian "to raise to explicit consciousness the question of the truth of, first, an interpretation of the most pressing, fundamental questions in our contemporary situation and, second, the answers provided by a particular religious tradition" (7).

Tracy portrays interpretation in terms of a dialectic between reader and text. His preferred model is that of a "conversation" between the text—the religious "classic"—and the experience, or pre-understanding, which the reader brings to it. On the one hand, he avoids pure subjectivity by stressing that religious "classics" contain a "certain permanence and excess of meaning that resists a 'definitive' interpretation" and that has the power to challenge and to change the reader's assumptions about reality (Tracy 1989:40).

On the other hand, Tracy emphasizes the pre-understanding—the lack of autonomy—of the reader. He follows Gadamer in asserting the inevitable role of pre-understanding in interpretation: "no interpreter enters into the attempt to understand any text without pre-judgments formed by the history of the effects of his or her culture" (Tracy 1989:34). Because of the reader's situatedness, there is no guarantee that the reader will retrieve the

author's original "meaning." For Tracy this is not a handicap but a liberating possibility, for it allows "classics" to speak beyond their own time and place since as conversation partners with the text, "we live in and by our finitude and historicity with the liberating insight that 'Insofar as we understand at all we understand differently (from the original author)'" (Tracy 1989:43).

The process of interpreting religious texts is thus a creative and fully two-way process: "To interpret the religious classics is to allow them to challenge what we presently consider possible. To interpret them is also to allow ourselves to challenge them through every hermeneutic of critique, retrieval, and suspicion we possess. To understand them at all we must converse with them" (Tracy 1987:84).

The implications for interfaith dialogue are substantial. By challenging the possibility—even the desirability—of any final and definitive reading of religious texts, Tracy allows for a reinterpretation of Christian teachings that formerly supported religious particularism and exclusivism.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASIS: NO EXTRALINGUISTIC EXPERIENCE

Tracy's claims for the radically hermeneutical nature of theology are grounded in a particular epistemological vision. To my knowledge, Tracy nowhere sets forth this vision in any systematic fashion. Instead, his epistemological assumptions surface intermittently, in seemingly off-hand statements which hint at a broader philosophical view.

A recurrent theme in Tracy's writings is his claim that all experience, understanding, and knowledge is radically hermeneutical and linguistic. In other words, there is no "pure" or unmediated experience or understanding. All experience and understanding is mediated through—or perhaps constructed by—one's historical/psychological/cultural/linguistic "set." A very similar position among philosophers of religion has been labeled "constructivism," and is associated with such thinkers as Wayne Proudfoot, Steven T. Katz, and Hans H. Penner.⁵ However, a more direct influence for Tracy's position is Ricoeur, who asserts: "The mediating role of imagination

5. I have been unable to find any direct influence of the constructivist school on Tracy. Although Tracy cites both Katz and Penner in *The Analogical Imagination*, and cites Penner in *Plurality and Ambiguity*, the citations are not to ostensibly "constructivist" works. Cf. Tracy 1981:189 n.66 and 223 n.27; and 1987:140 n.50. For articles by the constructivist school, see Katz 1983 and 1992. For a critical survey of constructivism by an opponent, see "Introduction: Mysticism, Constructivism, and Forgetting" in Forman 1990:3-49.

is forever at work in lived reality (*le vécu*). *There is no lived reality, no human or social reality, which is not already represented in some sense*" (Ricoeur 2000:343).

Tracy's own "set" appears to be the postmodern rejection of the impartial and autonomous ego/subject/self. In *Plurality and Ambiguity* he effectively declares the downfall of the Cartesian ego and the rise of the radically *situated* self: "Whether we know it or not, we are all de-centered egos now. We are all linguistic, historical, social beings struggling for some new interpretations of ourselves, our language, history, society, and culture" (Tracy 1987:50). The result is a loss of "any belief in pure self-presence as well as any claims to certainty or to apodictic knowledge" (61).

What the de-centered subject has instead of certainty is her *interpretation*. Life for the non-autonomous subject is thoroughly hermeneutical. In his 1989 essay "Hermeneutical Reflections in the New Paradigm," Tracy writes: "In order to understand this world—indeed even to experience it—we must interpret it" (1989:55). Similarly, he asserts in *Plurality and Ambiguity* that "Every time we act, deliberate, judge, understand, or even experience, we are interpreting. To understand at all is to interpret" (1987:9). Later in the same work he declares that "all experience and all understanding is hermeneutical" (77).

I gather that Tracy asserts that experience, understanding, and knowledge are radically hermeneutical because he believes that they are, more fundamentally, radically *linguistic*. In the postmodern context, "Reality and knowledge are...linked to language" (78). In another passage, Tracy goes even further: "What we discover...is that *all understanding is linguistic through and through*....There are no pure ideas free of the web of language. There are no pure messages" (43).

It is difficult to determine exactly how broadly Tracy intends these epistemological claims to apply. First, as mentioned earlier, they are non-systematic in nature. Secondly, they often occur in the context of discussion of the nature of texts and their interpretation. It is possible, then, that these seemingly global statements are intended only to refer to experience and understanding related to *texts*.

However, I doubt that Tracy is so careless with his language: surely he recognizes that such statements will be taken globally. Take, for example, the following statement: "*Every time* we act, deliberate, judge, understand, or even experience, we are interpreting. To understand *at all* is to interpret" (9,

my emphasis). It would be difficult to read this as applying only to the interpretation of texts, particularly in light of the following assertion, from another of his works: “Interpretation is not something added to experience and understanding but is always-already present as intrinsic to understanding itself” (Tracy 1989:55). I am forced to conclude that Tracy actually means what he seems to be saying.

Thus Tracy’s epistemological position can be summarized as follows. *All* experience and understanding is hermeneutical because it is linguistic. To experience and to understand is to interpret, and we cannot interpret apart from language. There is no prelinguistic or extralinguistic experience or understanding.

The theological implications of this epistemological stance are substantial. If *all* experience is thoroughly linguistic, it necessarily requires interpretation, as does any text; and if *all* experience requires interpretation, then it comes as no surprise that religious scriptures, confessional positions, and theologies—all of which involve experience in some way (e.g., experiences of divine revelation, experiences of Ultimate Reality, the reader’s own experiences)—should require interpretation as well. In this way, Tracy can resist claims to certainty about religious truth, and can thereby open up a space for religious pluralism.

I applaud Tracy’s sincere commitment to real dialogue. His methodology promises a way for theologians to escape the blind alleys of particularism and move out into a world rich with diverse religious and philosophical viewpoints, many of which have much to offer the Christian theologian in the crucial task of making Christian teachings relevant to the pluralist situation. Nonetheless, as I will attempt to show in the concluding part of this paper, the underpinnings of Tracy’s theology run into trouble when faced with an epistemology radically different from his own. Just such an epistemology is found in Mahâyâna Buddhism, to which we turn next.

PART 2: MAHÂYÂNA CLAIMS FOR EXTRALINGUISTIC EXPERIENCE

Seemingly in direct contradiction to Tracy’s claims, the Mahâyâna Buddhist tradition holds that *all* experience, knowledge, and understanding is decidedly *not* linguistic. According to Mahâyâna teaching, the Ultimate Reality which is experienced in awakening to enlightenment (or which *is*

that awakening) can *only* be experienced outside of, and apart from, language. Indeed, as we will see, language itself is seen as an obstacle to the liberating realization of Ultimate Reality. Thus there is an experience, and an understanding of that experience, which lies outside the realm of language. This would seem to undermine Tracy's epistemological position, and potentially the theological methodology which rests upon it.

However, the Mahâyâna view of the relationship between language and experience is more complex than it appears at first glance. Indeed, while the Mahâyâna affirms the pre-linguistic nature of the awakening experience, it subsequently "moves back to reclaim, if possible, a valid role for language" (Keenan 1997: 26-7). This latter move becomes particularly pronounced in the Yogâcâra school, in the work of Asanga and Dharmapâla. It is my contention that Yogâcâra's sophisticated epistemology both challenges that of Tracy, and provides a means for reconciling Tracy's epistemological claims with those of Yogâcâra, and Mahâyâna generally, concerning the existence of extralinguistic experience.

For an understanding of the complexities of Yogâcârin epistemology, it is necessary to look more closely at how views of the relation between language and experience developed within the broader Mahâyâna tradition. Accordingly, we first will take a brief look at the move toward radical ineffability within the Mâdhyamika school, particularly in the work of Nâgârjuna. Next we will look at the continuities and modifications of the Mâdhyamika position within early Yogâcâra, paying special attention to one of its founders, Asanga. Finally, we will look at how a later Yogâcârin, Dharmapâla, affirms the existence of a pre-linguistic experience and ascribes part of the problem to language itself, then reclaims language as a "lower" truth which can lead persons to the very experience which transcends language.

NÂGÂRJUNA AND THE MÂDHYAMIKA MOVE TO RADICAL INEFFABILITY

In contrast with the "Monastic Buddhism"⁶ from which it originated, Mahâyâna substantially broadened the extent of *úûnyatâ*, or emptiness.

6. I use this term as a neutral designation for the forms of Buddhism which began with the followers of Gautama and developed through the period of the codification of the *Abhidharma* literature—that is, the Buddhisms which Mahâyâna pejoratively labeled "Hînayâna." Contemporary Theravâda traces its descent from these forms of Buddhism (in particular, the *Sthavira* (Pali: *Thera*) group).

Whereas Monastic Buddhism had ascribed emptiness to the self by analyzing the self into constituent *dharma*s which possess a degree of substantiality (*svabhava*), the Mādhyamika (“Middle Way”) school of the Mahâyâna denied the substantiality of the self *and* its constituent *dharma*s, declaring empty even emptiness itself.

Led by its founder, Nâgârjuna, the Mādhyamika school makes its move toward the radical ineffability of the experience of awakening. The primary obstacle to the realization of emptiness, according to Nâgârjuna, is conceptual and propositional thought, both of which are bound up with language. Concepts conceal or obstruct the realization of Ultimate Reality, and thus conceptual thought cannot reveal Ultimate Reality. And because language and conceptual thought are inextricably bound up with each other, Ultimate Reality must be radically ineffable. From the ultimate standpoint of *ûûnyatâ*, “nothing can be literally said,” because “ultimately there is no entity of which emptiness or nonemptiness can be predicated”; “language is hence at best only ostensive” (Garfield 1995: 280). In short, Nâgârjuna holds to a radically apophatic position.

The obvious question arises: if language cannot convey Ultimate Reality, why did the Buddha—and indeed, why does Nâgârjuna himself—use language to teach the Buddhadharma? Nâgârjuna replies by positing two kinds of truth: conventional, or provisional truth (*samvrti satya*); and ultimate, or absolute, truth (*pâramârtha satya*).⁷ Keenan interprets this teaching as simultaneously asserting both the apophatic nature of the Ultimate, and the soteriological validity of language:

The truth of ultimate meaning (*paramârtha-satya*) is ineffable (*avâcyatva*) and silent.... Yet, in order to teach, one has no alternative but to employ conventional words and to express conventional truth. Thus one has to rely upon language (Keenan 1997:15).

The problem, however, is that it is easy to miss Nâgârjuna’s second move, the affirmation of validity of language, because he does not elaborate on it in

7. This is set forth in chapter 24:8,10 of his *Mûlamadhyamakakârikâ*:

The Buddha’s teaching of the Dharma
Is based on two truths:
A truth of worldly convention
And an ultimate truth.

....

Without a foundation in the conventional truth,
The significance of the ultimate cannot be taught.
Without understanding the significance of the ultimate,
Liberation is not achieved (Garfield 1995: 296, 298).

the *Mûlamadhyamakakârikâ*. Consequently, the affirmation of a soteriological role for language tended to be lost in later Mâdhyamika. Indeed, as Janice Dean Willis notes, many of Nâgârjuna's followers misinterpreted emptiness "as unqualified nihilism" (1979:17). As Keenan writes, the Mâdhyamika's "idea that everything was empty was a source of despondency and consternation to practitioners....In a world of negation and essencelessness, there appears to be no refuge and no sure path to cessation. No doctrinal discourse can maintain its validity and no scriptures can present words of awakening" (Keenan 1997:204).

ASANGA AND THE RISE OF YOGÂCÂRA

Founded by the brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu in the fifth century CE, the Yogâcâra school attempted to moderate the radically apophatic tendencies of the Mâdhyamika school. By no means did Yogâcâra deny the extralinguistic nature of Ultimate Reality. However, beginning with Asanga, the Yogâcârins "sought to set things aright by explaining úûnyatâ in a more positive way" (Willis 1979:14). Keenan elaborates on this move: "[T]he Yogâcâra thinkers....attempted to ground insight into emptiness in a critical understanding of the mind, articulated in sophisticated theoretical discourse....Asanga's aim was to revive theory as dependently co-arising understanding through rethinking the meaning of emptiness. Yogâcâra is thus a partial reaffirmation of the validity of abhidharmic analyses and expositions. It no longer presupposes the naïve realism of Hînayâna Abhidharma, but attempts to make explicit the underlying structure and dynamic functioning of consciousness" (Keenan 1993:203).

Yogâcâra holds that all phenomena are generated by the mind or consciousness (*vijñâna*) (Hattori 1987:523).⁸ It explains the apparent reality of phenomena—which Mâdhyamika fails to explain clearly—by ascribing them to the existence of consciousness. At the same time, it affirms the Mâdhyamika doctrine of total emptiness by teaching that consciousness itself is inherently dependent (because it depends for its origination upon preceding moments of consciousness), and is thus insubstantial. Yogâcâra

8. This doctrine gave rise to the school's other names, *Vijñânavâda* ("consciousness doctrine") and *Cittamatra* ("mind only").

effects this compromise through the use of Mādhyamika's two-truths doctrine. Consciousness, and indeed, the objects it fabricates, are conventionally real; yet because their origination is dependent upon other causes and conditions, they are not ultimately real.

Like Mādhyamika, Yogâcâra asserts the ineffability of the awakening experience of Ultimate Reality. As Keenan writes, "Underlying all of the arguments is the consensus in all Yogâcâra texts...that the wisdom of awakening (*buddhatva*) is itself beyond language, beyond all mental operations" (Keenan 1997:25). And, like Mādhyamika, Yogâcâra identifies language as a cause of the problem of delusion. As Janice Dean Willis explains, Asanga argues "that ordinary beings (who possess the most 'inferior' knowledge of reality) believe that a name stands for a thing...[and that names] accurately characterize the nature (or essence) of the things to which they are applied" (Willis 1979:39). This mistaken assumption that names somehow confer reality or essence leads to attachment. And, of course, attachment produces suffering, in the Buddhist calculus.

At the core of the Yogâcâra analysis is the concept of the "container consciousness," or *âlaya-vijñâna*. As Keenan describes it, this "foundational substructure of all mental operations" contains karmic "seeds," which "form the habitual proclivities according to which each being discriminates and verbally fabricates images and names." These "latent seed impressions...subtly and subconsciously program our minds to construct images and ideas believed to correspond to real essences existing apart from the mind." In this way the Yogâcârins account for the generation of experience (Keenan 1993:205).

The *âlaya-vijñâna* is bound up with language. Asanga holds that "Most of the permeations of consciousness are permeations of language. They are conscious constructs (*vijñapti*) because they are formed as ideas in a mind imbued with language" (Keenan 1997:35). These "seminal permeations of language" engender all aspects of ordinary (non-enlightened) experience, including the sense of subject and object (Cf. Keenan 1997:123 n90). Here again, language is intimately associated with the creation of delusory experience.

However, Asanga is not content to stop at this negative portrayal of language, as Mādhyamika tends to be. He seeks to reclaim a valid soteriological role for language. While simultaneously holding to the extralinguistic character of Ultimate Reality, he wants to show how it is possible for the buddhas and bodhisattvas to use the conventions of language in order to communi-

cate the liberating message of enlightenment to all beings. To accomplish this double goal, he extends Nâgârjuna's two-truths doctrine by adding an intermediate truth that stands as a transition state between conventional and ultimate realities. In the resulting doctrine of the "three natures," the first is equivalent to Nâgârjuna's conventional truth; the third, to the ineffable ultimate truth. The second nature, called by some writers the "other-dependent" nature, provides a transitional state of realization between conventional experience and the ineffable experience of the Ultimate (cf. Willis 1979:18).

The other-dependent nature thus constitutes a kind of bridge between ordinary, dualistic, linguistic experience, and the ineffable experience of the Ultimate. At the same time, the other-dependent nature also constitutes a bridge from Ultimate Reality back to the conventional experience of ordinary beings. In this way, Asanga shows how it is possible for enlightened beings to communicate the message of enlightenment to ordinary beings. This communication occurs through the use of "skillful means" (*upâya*): knowing the inherent nature of language, enlightened beings use it skillfully to teach those who are not yet enlightened.⁹

In other words, Asanga provides the theoretical mechanism to differentiate "a fabricated, deluded use of language versus a wise, awakened, and thus valid, usage" (Keenan 1997:24-5). The former use, which mistakes names of things for their essences, binds beings to the delusions of conventional reality. The latter use, on the other hand, has the power to liberate.

DHARMAPÂLA'S RECLAMATION OF LANGUAGE AS SKILLFUL MEANS

Asanga's more positive attitude toward language and experience is developed further by the later Yogâcârin Dharmapâla (c. 530-561), in his *Ātaka Commentary*.¹⁰ Keenan notes that Dharmapâla's central concern

9. I realize that I have a great deal more to learn about the three-truths doctrine. The foregoing discussion represents my best effort to characterize the doctrine, but I recognize that it leaves much to be desired.

10. Dharmapâla belonged to the so-called Sâkâra-vijñânavâdin school of the Yogâcâra, which held "that the consciousness...is necessarily endowed with the 'form' (*âkâra*) of an object and that of a subject." They were opposed by the Nirâkâra-vijñânavâdins, who held that only the consciousness is real, the forms of subject and object being merely imaginary. Hattori 1987:527.

in this work is “the issue of the value of language,” which “constitutes the boundaries and bounds of samsaric existence” (1997:57).

Language constitutes for Dharmapâla the boundary between ultimate and conventional realities: the latter can be spoken of; the former cannot. “If things can be articulated, they are provisional and not real. That which is not provisional but real is definitely ineffable. All that can be articulated is conventional and not real” (87). (In this case, by “not real” Dharmapâla must mean “not *ultimately* real.”)

One achieves the standpoint of enlightenment by separating oneself from the “propensities of language”: “when one is definitively apart from propensities toward language, the subsequently attained mind penetratingly focuses on the two truths.” “Insight into emptiness and no-self can cut off {these imaginings} entirely, lead sentient beings to sever the fetters of the triple world, personally realize that final and quiescent cessation, and then they will convert others and lead them to attain liberation by uprooting the roots of the hindrances to true practice” (123).

Yet as that passage suggests, Dharmapâla insists that enlightened beings do not, as Mādhyamika would have it, simply rest in yogic emptiness. Rather, they turn back to enlighten others. Dharmapâla argues that language can also play a positive role in the liberation of beings from samsara. He appeals here to the idea of “*upâya*” or “skillful means”:

The Tathâgata’s compassion employs skillful means to teach that all things are only conscious constructs in order to lead them to abandon external objects. Having abandoned external objects, mistaken conscious constructs are destroyed. When mistaken constructs are destroyed, they realize cessation (120).

Thus Dharmapâla offers a nuanced view of language, in which it continues to be implicated in the delusions of samsara, and yet, when used skillfully from the standpoint of emptiness, can lead others to liberation from samsara.

Summary of Part 2

From the early Mādhyamika of Nâgârjuna, through the Yogâcâra of Asanga and Dharmapâla, Mahâyâna Buddhism has stressed the pure, extralinguistic character of the awakening experience, and has implicated language in the delusory consciousness which binds ordinary beings to samsaric existence. The major difference between the two schools is over the possibility of a

positive role for language. Despite Nâgârjuna's "two-truths" doctrine, Mâdhyamika moves toward radical apophasis, denying any positive role for language. Yogâcâra counters by positing a transitional ("other-dependent") stage between conventional and ultimate realities, a kind of bridge across which enlightened beings can communicate with the unenlightened through the use of *upâya*, skillful means.

PART 3: RECONCILING TRACY'S EPISTEMOLOGY WITH THE MAHÂYÂNA CHALLENGE

The Problem

At this point, we are faced with two mutually contradictory epistemologies. That epistemology hinted at in Tracy's *Plurality and Ambiguity* asserts that all experience and all understanding is "linguistic through and through." On the other hand, Mahâyâna Buddhism claims that there is a kind of experience and understanding which is extralinguistic—and that this experience, in a sense, is the only *real* experience. This disagreement is ironic because Tracy's epistemology is a key part of an overall effort to be open to other conceptualities. Yet it is unclear how he can truly hear what Mahâyâna is saying about the extralinguistic character of the awakening experience when he presupposes the contrary.

At first glance, it would seem that Tracy can respond to this problem in one of two ways. The first would be to stand pat on his claim that all experience and understanding is linguistic through and through. He has already provided ample reason to do so: his stated opposition to theological understandings that privilege confessional positions. Certainly the Mahâyâna claim to extralinguistic experience qualifies as a confessional position. Yet he can only maintain his own epistemological stance either by denying *a priori* the Mahâyâna claim, or by "neutralizing" it. To deny the Mahâyâna claim would imply that Tracy "knows better" than Buddhist practitioners the nature of their experience—a questionable claim, at best. Furthermore, to prejudge the truth status of the Mahâyâna claim hardly contributes to the truly interactive conversation which Tracy advocates. On the other hand, Tracy can neutralize the Mahâyâna claim by "correlating" it with the common postmodern sense of the pervasiveness of language in experience. This would see the Mahâyâna claim as mythical or metaphorical, rather than epistemological or propositional. However, from the Mahâyâna standpoint, the

postmodern view is itself symptomatic of the problem of samsaric existence: any view which privileges language over the Ultimate is bound up with the delusions of samsara.

The second option is for Tracy to revise his own epistemological stance to accommodate the Mahâyâna claim: that is, his revised position would hold that *most* experience, but *not all*, is linguistic through and through. Tracy has certainly left this option open, through his notion of the religious “classic.” As noted earlier in this paper, Tracy notes that “classic” texts contain a “certain permanence and excess of meaning that resists a ‘definitive’ interpretation” (1989:40). Classic texts contain something “more” which transcends and resists the meanings available to socio-historically situated interpreter/readers. If anything qualifies for that “excess,” it is the Mahâyâna claim of an extralinguistic experience of ultimate reality. Furthermore, Tracy argues that the reader must be open to the possibility that the religious classic’s “excess of meaning” has the power to challenge, and implicitly to change, her own assumptions about the nature of truth. If the “excess of meaning” is the Mahâyâna claim to an extralinguistic experience of awakening, then it could overrule the epistemological assumptions which Tracy brings to the interpretation of Mahâyâna teachings.

However, if the Scylla of holding to Tracy’s epistemological position is fraught with difficulties, the Charybdis of revising his position appears no safer. By acknowledging that some experience, and specifically the religious experience of awakening, is not linguistic, Tracy implicitly acknowledges that the testimony of at least one confessional position, that of the Mahâyâna, is possibly true. If that is the case, then the Mahâyâna claim could naturally assume a privileged position in theological discourse. Yet, as we saw above, Tracy does not wish to privilege any particular confessional position. Furthermore, to privilege the Mahâyâna experience would undermine or at least weaken Tracy’s own radically hermeneutical theological stance. As I attempted to show in Part 1, as long as *all* experience is thoroughly linguistic, it necessarily requires interpretation; and if *all* experience requires interpretation, then religious scriptures, doctrines, confessional positions, and theologies—all of which involve experience in some way—*necessarily* require interpretation as well. However, this connection is severed if some experiences are not thoroughly linguistic and so are not subject to interpretation. Such experiences can only be affirmed, confessed, proclaimed. Of course, the teachings, scriptures, and theologies which *refer* to that experi-

ence will necessarily be matters for interpretation, but the extralinguistic experience itself can only stand as it is.

The awakening experience becomes, then, an absolute against which all other experiences must be evaluated, and in comparison to which all other experiences are more or less “real.” This, of course, is precisely the role the awakening experience plays in Mahâyâna thought. However, to give the Mahâyâna confessional position such a privileged role in theology would fly in the face of Tracy’s resistance to such practices in Christian contexts.

Given Tracy’s obvious respect for the possibilities of genuine dialogue with other faith positions, I doubt that he would be comfortable with either of the alternatives discussed above. Yet it seems that his totalizing statements about the thoroughly linguistic nature of experience, if taken literally, back him into this corner when he is confronted with Mahâyâna’s radical challenge to his epistemology.

TRACY’S “UPÂYA”?

Thus far, we have been approaching the problem in terms of conflicting epistemological positions. However, another option suggests itself: stop taking Tracy’s epistemological statements literally. That is, what if we instead interpret Tracy’s statements as themselves a kind of “play”—as rhetorical devices intended to warn of the dangers of absolutizing certain interpretations and readings, as well as to open our minds to new possibilities for interpretation? In other words, Tracy’s epistemological claims can be seen as similar to the “skillful means” described by Asanga and Dharmapâla. This is not to say that Tracy should not be taken at his word; quite the contrary, it is to say that “his word” functions as a kind of performative utterance rather than an epistemological proposition. Nor am I claiming that Tracy’s claims about the inherently linguistic nature of experience are not epistemological in nature, for they clearly are; they are assertions about the way we come to know what is real and true. However, it is possible to understand Tracy as taking an extreme, and ultimately unsupportable, epistemological position as a means to shake us out of our complacency and to warn us of the even more dangerous extremes of secularist and confessionalist reductionism.

This reading does not take Tracy’s comments as applying universally. *All* experience is *not* linguistic through and through; the awakening experience (and perhaps other experiences) is extralinguistic. Rather, such comments refer only to experiences within samsaric existence—that is, our *normal*

experience of reality. Tracy's comments remind us that *normal* experience is thoroughly bound up with our conceptual and linguistic frameworks. As such, it cannot be absolutized.

Asanga and Dharmapâla would not disagree with that message. They hold that ordinary experience—non-enlightened experience—is largely a creation of mind imbued with the conceptualities of language. Recall, for instance, Asanga's assertion that the permeations of language engender the constructs of consciousness—including “the experiencer, the experienced content, [and] valid experiencing” (quoted in Keenan 1997:123 n90)—is certainly reminiscent of Tracy's assertions about the linguistic nature of experience.

To be sure, to say that experience is *bound up* with language is not to say, with the Yogâcârins, that language is bound up in *the construction* of experience *by* consciousness. I am not arguing that Tracy is a Yogâcârin, or for that matter, an absolute subjective idealist. However, both the “skillful-means Tracy” and the Yogâcârins work to point out that we cannot take for granted the “reality” of ordinary experience, for it is inextricably involved with the conventions of language, and as such is a matter of interpretation, a hermeneutical object.

Yet would not this reading of Tracy also weaken his theological position, as does the “revisionist” position discussed in the previous section? Does not this reading, by backing away from the claim that all experience is linguistic, break the chain of necessity that authorizes Tracy's advocacy of a fundamentally interpretive approach to theology? Yes, and no. Certainly this reading of Tracy cannot be used to mandate the creative interpretation of religious texts on the grounds that all experience must be interpreted. Nevertheless, even if it is ultimately unsupportable, Tracy's “*upâya*” does work to undermine those who hold that only a hermeneutics of confessionalist retrieval is possible. For, in a sense—although he does not express it this way himself—his point is that religious texts *themselves* are best seen as instances of *upâya*. Contrary to biblical literalists and fundamentalists, he holds that religious texts are not ends in themselves. They are rather means toward an end. Scriptures are not the message; they are the medium. As such they must be read and interpreted in light of the reader's own social, historical, and cultural context. In this regard, Tracy's “correlative” method becomes especially important, since the texts alone cannot speak for themselves: they speak only when the reader engages them in a “mutually critical dialogue,” bringing to bear her own experiences and the

needs and circumstances of the present context, yet remaining open to a message that may challenge those experiences and that context. The same goes for theological discourse—including that of Tracy himself—and of this paper!

In short, then, Tracy's global epistemological claims may be read as a kind of skillful means, designed to focus the reader of religious texts, and particularly the theologian, on the need for creative dialogue with, rather than mere retrieval from, religious texts. As such, Tracy's claims do not rule out the possibility of extralinguistic experience such as that asserted by Mahâyâna Buddhism. At the same time, however, they function to shake up the reader, to challenge conventional understandings, and to remind the reader of the need for creative interaction with religious texts.

CONCLUDING PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

I have not found it pleasurable to challenge David Tracy's work. For several reasons, I want him to succeed, to be "right." As an aspiring theologian working at the interface of Christianity and other faiths, I find much to admire in Tracy's work. He has sketched a methodology that allows for a *mutually* critical dialogue between Christians and non-Christians, a dialogue in which, as Jeanrond writes, one "listens to the other as other without attempting to subordinate the conversation partners to one's own agenda" (1998:139). I can conceive of no more *Christian* approach to our neighbors.

Furthermore, my earlier studies of linguistic theory lead me to sympathize instinctively with Tracy's emphasis on the hermeneutical and linguistic character of experience, understanding, and knowledge. Language does allow us to "think the world" in certain ways. Language gives us inherited categories with which to pigeonhole, to systematize, to make meaningful—or to misperceive and misunderstand—a world of experiences that would otherwise be chaotic and confusing. For similar reasons, I also sympathize with the Mahâyâna assertion of the integral role of language in shaping the delusions of ordinary existence.

Yet my own experience with Zen meditation practice and my Christian belief in the reality of the trinitarian God convince me that there is also experience which transcends language as well as normal modes of conceptual and discursive thought. While I do not claim to have experienced "en-

lightenment," I have caught glimpses of a nondual reality similar to that described in the Mahâyâna literature. It is difficult for me to deny these experiences—nor do I wish to deny them. Consequently, despite my great admiration for Tracy, I cannot share his epistemological claim that all experience is linguistic "through and through."

In this paper, I have attempted to demonstrate the challenge the Mahâyâna experience represents to the epistemological claims that ground Tracy's theological methodology. Because of my great respect for Tracy's work, I have tried to find a way to salvage his position in light of that challenge: that is, by reading his work as a skillful means of decentering the reader's expectations and motivating the play of creative interpretation of religious texts. Perhaps I have been too kind to Tracy; perhaps his epistemology truly does come up short. However, I believe that there is truth in what he is saying, as there is in the message of the Yogâcâra sages Asanga and Dharmapâla.

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The Dialectics of Language and Experience in David Tracy's Epistemology: A Response to David Brockman¹

RACHEL SOPHIA BAARD

MR. BROCKMAN'S CONCLUSION ON THE NATURE OF DAVID TRACY'S EPISTEMOLOGY is: "All experience and understanding is hermeneutical because it is linguistic. To experience and to understand is to interpret, and we cannot interpret apart from language. *There is no prelinguistic or extralinguistic experience or understanding*" (italics mine).² This, he says, is in conflict with the radically different epistemology of Mahayana Buddhism, which believes that Ultimate Reality can only be experienced outside of language, and that language can constitute an obstacle to this experience. The problem that Mr. Brockman foresees is this: "...it is unclear how [Tracy] can truly hear what Mahayana is saying about the extralinguistic character of the awakening experience when he presupposes the contrary".

¹ I am indebted to Prof. Mark Taylor of Princeton Theological Seminary and Prof. Dirkie Smit of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, for their valuable comments on the subject matter of this paper.

² The distinction between prelinguistic and extralinguistic is not made clear in Mr. Brockman's paper, so I must assume that he reads them as synonymous. I prefer the term "extralinguistic" over "prelinguistic" because the latter seems to imply consecutive moments in time (understood in linear fashion) as if the self can exist without language now and then move into language (an or/or situation), whereas the former seems to imply the possibility of the co-existence of language and non-language at the same time (a both/and situation).

Mr. Brockman's reading of Tracy struck me as odd in light of the well-known debate between the "Chicago school," represented by Tracy, and the "Yale school," represented by George Lindbeck. In his now classic 1984 statement on "postliberal theology," *The Nature of Doctrine*, Lindbeck depicted Tracy as a so-called liberal "experiential-expressivist,"³ describing this position as follows: "...whatever the variations, thinkers of this tradition all locate ultimately significant contact with whatever is finally important to religion [read: experience of Ultimate Reality] in the *prereflective experiential depths of the self* [read: extralinguistic] and regard the public or outer features of religion [read: language] as expressive and evocative objectifications (i.e. nondiscursive symbols) of internal experience" (21, italics and interpolations mine).

His own model, the "cultural-linguistic" model, said Lindbeck, can be seen as a reversal of the liberal model under which he included Tracy: "the major contrast between the two models...[is] a '*reversal of the relation between the inner and outer*'" (36). "In short," said Lindbeck, "it is necessary to have the means for expressing an experience in order to have it" (37). The way Lindbeck would then construe the difference between his own position and that of "experiential-expressivists" is this: while he (Lindbeck) holds to the view that expressive and communicative symbol systems, including language, are primary, so that there are no uninterpreted experiences; the experiential-expressivists (including Tracy) think of experience as prior to conceptualization or symbolization, i.e., as *prior to language*. In other words, in depicting Tracy as an "experiential-expressivist," Lindbeck's reading of Tracy was the exact opposite of Brockman's reading.

Why these different readings of Tracy? I suspect it has to do with the complexities of Tracy's understanding of the relationship between experi-

³ Although Lindbeck allowed for some diversity among the theologians of the liberal trajectory, there is no doubt that he listed Tracy under the heading of "experiential-expressivist" in *The Nature of Doctrine*. On p. 38 he wrote: "I shall simply note that even those experiential-expressivists – such as Lonergan (or Karl Rahner and David Tracy) – who acknowledge that experience cannot be expressed except in public and intersubjective forms, do seem to maintain a kind of privacy in the origins of experience and language that, if Wittgenstein is right, is more than doubtful"; and on p. 136 (footnote 4), on the notion of the classic, he wrote, "Tracy's model, unlike mine, is experiential-expressive."

ence and language. In his response to Lindbeck's reading of his position, Tracy took issue with the former's claim that the theologians of the liberal trajectory all possess a unilateral understanding of the relationship of experience and language (1985, 462). Agreeing that Lindbeck's analysis points to real problems in the liberal tradition from Schleiermacher to Tillich, Eliade, Rahner, Lonergan et al, Tracy nevertheless rejects the depiction of this tradition as experiential-expressivist, arguing that the heirs of this tradition, following Gadamer, Ricoeur and other hermeneutical thinkers, have been rethinking the dialectical (not unilateral) relationship between experience and language. "In fact," he says, "the major argument of the hermeneutical tradition since Gadamer has been against Romantic 'expressivist' understandings of language's relationship to 'experience'" (1985, 463).

Experience can thus not be understood on a Romantic expressivist model. But, says Tracy, "*this crucial insight does not mean that we should, in effect, abandon half the dialectic by simply placing all experience under the new guardianship of and production by the grammatical rules of the codes of language*" (1985, 464). Tracy's approach, by his own account, is thoroughly hermeneutical, honoring a dialectical relationship between language and experience. Tracy's response to Lindbeck, albeit to the opposite accusation than that of Brockman, can thus easily be used to refute Brockman's reading of Tracy. However, that still leaves us with the question, what does Tracy mean when he says that all experience is "linguistic through and through," and how does that rhyme with his refusal to place all experience under the "guardianship" of language?

A reading of Tracy against the background of the so-called "linguistic turn" in Western philosophy provides some clues in this regard. In *Plurality and Ambiguity*, Tracy focuses on this linguistic turn as the rejection of both positivism and romanticism. Both saw language as instrumental, as secondary and even peripheral to the "real thing," the latter being purely extralinguistic "truth." Tracy rejects both these modernist trajectories, writing that "what is lost in both these interpretations of language as instrument is not only the more subtle relationships of language, knowledge, and reality, but also *the social and historical character of all understanding through language*" (1987, 49, italics mine).

The challenge to instrumentalist notions of language thus implies a revolution of the notion of the self in postmodern thought: "to challenge instrumentalist interpretations of language is not only to reintroduce society and history into all notions of reality and truth, but also to displace the autono-

mous ego from its false pretensions to mastery and certainty” (1987, 50). What Tracy rejects is the individualism that believes that language is used to express a deeper self, and that Truth is the possession of the individual. What he affirms is the notion of a socially constructed self, the awareness that Ultimate Truth is not the possession of the individual. Ironically, in *Dialogue with the Other*, Tracy finds this understanding of the self to be the Western thought pattern that has the greatest *affinity* (he would not speak of *identity* – 88) with Buddhism: “My own belief is that the nearest affinity to Buddhist thought (or, more exactly, to the Mahayana Buddhism of Nagarjuna as the more radical form of Buddhism)...is to be found in...certain contemporary strands of post-modern thought...[in] the common insistence on the illusionary character of the self and thereby of any modern Western attempt to use that self to ground or provide a foundation for ‘reality’” (1990, 70-1).

The decentering of the self in postmodern thought is thus intricately intertwined with the linguistic turn, for the latter implies the social construction of the self, and the impossibility of private access to total truth. From the perspective of Western thought, those links would imply an instability in Mahayana Buddhist thought, an instability that lies in its affirmation of both no-self (similar to Western postmodernity’s linguisticality of the self) and the ineffability of the experience of Ultimate Reality (similar to Western modernity’s concept of pure and objective truth). But Buddhist scholar Dale S. Wright points out that we should be very careful not to read our Western presuppositions into Buddhist thought (however impossible it might be to avoid that completely). He argues that it was Western modernist presuppositions that often led to the idea that Buddhist enlightenment is an undistorted “pure experience” of “things as they are” beyond the shaping power of language. He argues that, “whatever connections East Asians have or have not been able to make between language and silence, our Western interpretations have been naïve in taking their antilanguage rhetoric literally and have failed to appreciate the ironic fact that this was their most powerful religious language” (1992, 129). His basic argument for this stance is as follows:

...the claim to have transcended language is distinct from the claim to a kind of experience that is prior to conceptual reflection. Understood in this way, the experience of ‘sudden awakening’ in Zen is immediate, but only in the sense that it is not mediated by self-conscious reflection on the part of

the experiencer. It is, however, thoroughly interpenetrated by the forces of linguistic shaping that are communicated through the institutions, practices, and beliefs of the community and its underlying tradition. While a great deal of experience is, in fact, prior to conceptual reflection, none is prior to the norms, values, and language of the culture within which the experiencer has been raised" (1992, 131, *italics mine*).⁴

I realize that Wright is referring to Zen Buddhism here, and that one should not equate all forms of Buddhism. Yet his point stands, namely that even the question of the relationship between language and experience in the Buddhist experience of Ultimate Reality has much more to do with what has been going on in Western culture than it does with Buddhism. He therefore asks: "What would it mean for our understanding of Zen to have undergone the transformation in perspective afforded by the 'linguistic turn' in contemporary Western thought?" (1993, 121). Part of this linguistic turn is the rejection of an instrumentalist and purely conceptual understanding of language, and the acknowledgement that language is present at the level of perception in such a way that even the apophatic experience is shaped by the rhetoric that has shaped the experiencer. Wright emphasizes that two quite different views of language are at play in Western interpretations of Buddhism: an instrumentalist ("modernist") view of language, and the view that human beings are linguistically constructed, situated selves ("postmodernist") (1992, 117).

Thus Wright concludes that understanding – even Zen understanding – is a social and linguistic practice into which participants must be initiated. The essence of Wright's argument seems to be that postmodern Western rejections of language-as-only-instrumental, make it possible for the first time to understand that the Buddhist rejection of language is not so much directed at language as at reflection (1992, 130). Whatever the verdict on Zen or Mahayana Buddhism, Wright's point is worth noting. It is thus very possible that Western interpretations of Buddhism, thus far, have reflected more of Western Enlightenment ideals of the absolute subject and the ability of having pure knowledge, than of Buddhist Enlightenment. It is likewise possible that the problems Mr. Brockman foresees in connection with the lan-

⁴ For a more full-length discussion, which includes reflection on Mahayana Buddhism, see also Wright's *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

guage/experience relationship, has more to do with Western philosophical clashes between modernist and postmodernist understandings of the self, than with Buddhism.

Yet (and here we enter the “second half” of the dialectic in Tracy), it is possible, for all I know, that Mahayana Buddhism would challenge this linguistic non-linguisticity, despite its own version of the illusionary character of the self, by pointing again to the radically apophatic nature of the experience of Ultimate Reality. Ironically, it is precisely on this point where Tracy also finds some affinity between his own Catholic sensibilities and Buddhist thought (1990, 81). In regard to Tracy’s “apophatic turn” (which in no way contradicts his linguistic turn), we need to take a short detour first into Tracy’s understanding of Truth as Manifestation, which is, like his emphasis on language, based on the thought of the great hermeneutical thinkers, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur (1987, 28). In this view, Truth is fundamentally something that happens to a subject (it has an event-character) and is not under the control of the subject or that of language. In *The Analogical Imagination*, Tracy depicts this understanding of Truth as Manifestation as the typical Catholic vision, to be held in dialectical relation with the more typically Protestant Truth as Proclamation (1981, 193-229). Whereas the latter is more tied up with instrumentalist uses of language, the oft-neglected understanding of truth as manifestation implies very clearly the transcendence of linguistic categories: “We can experience the realm of the sacred only by a willingness to enter into that purely given, that sheer event of manifestation” (1981, 206). In Tracy’s later works, manifestation is more specifically understood in terms of the apophatic, as mysticism, and proclamation in terms of the ethical, as prophetic. But he never wants to separate the two, emphasizing the mystical-prophetic as the inseparable hearts of Christianity.

Tracy’s awareness of the extent to which we are shaped by the rhetoric within which we live does not lead him to argue that reality, especially Ultimate Reality, can only be experienced within a specific (or any) “language-game,” à la the late-Wittgensteinians. He is too much aware of the power of the whole that breaks through our preconceived categories even as we tend to interpret that power in terms of those categories. Although, as said above, this awareness was sharpened by his dialogue with Buddhists, it informed his thought from the start. Already in *Blessed Rage for Order* (originally published in 1975), Tracy affirmed the need for both a hermeneutical and a transcendental reflection (1996, 49-56). Werner Jeanrond summarizes the

dialectic in Tracy's thought well: "Hermeneutics, that is the theory of interpretation, is necessary to inform any concrete retrieval of the meanings inherent in our Christian texts; and the transcendental reflection is necessary because only an adequate appraisal of the limits of human thinking can point us in the direction of becoming receptive for the mystery of God without identifying one thing or the other with God" (1993, 147).

So not only do we find a non-instrumentalist understanding of language as bound up in experience in Tracy, denoting the situatedness of the self, but his thought on the language/experience relationship is further complicated by his refusal to separate the mystical and the prophetic, manifestation and proclamation. Theology as proclamation can only continue to live when rooted in real manifestation (1981, 214): "*The prelinguistic always precedes and envelops even as it is transformed by the linguistic power of proclamation...* Manifestation envelops every word from beginning to end, even as it allows itself to be transformed by the shattering paradigmatic power of the proclaimed word" (1981, 215, italics mine). Tracy's notion of the "classic" is based on this awareness: "...what we mean in naming certain texts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons 'classics' is that here we recognize nothing less than the disclosure of a reality we cannot but name truth...an experience that upsets conventional opinions and expands the sense of the possible..." (1981, 108).

In summary, then, Tracy finds a point of contact between Western and Buddhist thought at precisely the point where Brockman finds the problem, namely the postmodern turn to language, which is at the same time the decentering of the self, and which has some affinity with the Buddhist notion of no-self. Yet at the same time his thought is characterized by an emphasis on the apophatic, an awareness of the mystical, the language-breaking power of manifestation. Although this theme was present in his thought from the start, it is his dialogue with Buddhists that led him to an even greater appreciation of the radical mystics within the Christian tradition and thus deepened his "apophatic turn," although he does not thereby necessarily accept a Buddhist interpretation of the Christian God (1991, 135). One can therefore argue that it is precisely Tracy's awareness of our linguisticity (i.e., the radical historicity of our understanding) that makes it possible for him to be open to the religious other to the extent of being able to ultimately affirm silence as the "most appropriate kind of *speech* for evoking [the] necessary sense of the radical mystery [of Ultimate Reality]" (1987, 109)!

In conclusion, I will try to sketch briefly how I see Tracy's model for inter-religious dialogue. In his current apophatic turn Tracy sees Ultimate Reality as breaking through our linguistic categories, albeit in fragmentary form, and the task of the theologian as the gathering of the fragments (1999, 1-15). In finding the universal (Reality) revealed in the particular ("language" if you will), this understanding of manifestation is a departure from the Enlightenment's notion of a rational natural religion that undergirds all forms of religious expression, but it is also a departure from the notion that experience is controlled by language. As Tracy puts it in *Plurality and Ambiguity*: "When it is believable, religious faith manifests a sense of the radical mystery of all reality... the mystery, above all, of Ultimate Reality" (107). But at the same time "[t]here is no historyless, discourseless human being" (107), and no "natural religion" freed from history and discourse of the historical religions: "If anyone believes in a revelation of Ultimate Reality in a particular religious tradition, this affects her or his understanding of *all* reality" (108).

In other words, for Tracy no choice is possible between the linguistic turn and the apophatic turn. The linguistic turn decenters the self that would control and own truth, and opens it up to the breaking in of truth as manifestation. In turn, then, the truth that is manifested is proclaimed, or rather, shared (not just confessed).⁵ Moreover, I believe that new manifestation happens within this intersubjective proclamation rooted in earlier manifestation (thus, even in "instrumentalist" language-use, conceptual categories are transcended). That is why there is more than one classic – each contains that excess of meaning that is manifestation of Ultimate Reality. The task of the theologian is to gather these fragments of the breakthrough of Ultimate Reality, of the events of awakening.

⁵ The language that follows upon experience should have an element of intersubjectivity, opening up the possibility of new manifestation, new glimpses of truth that happen in the dialogue with the other. The way Mr. Brockman seemed to use the notion of "confession" implied a rhetoric of non-openness. Not even the ineffable experience of Ultimate Reality can merely be confessed – if there is no one to listen (to), to dialogue with, then why even bother to move to language? Mahayana Buddhism itself, in its doctrine of skillful means, obviously embraces more than confession, and moves to proclamation and, hence, some measure of interpretation.

Dialogue is thus both rooted in the manifestations of Truth (which is the extralinguistic breaking through of the whole, yet which is already "linguistic" in the sense of happening to a situated self), and dialogue can in itself become the occasion for further manifestation (i.e., in the dialogical instrumentalist use of language, something extralinguistic happens). The dialectic is thus to and fro, involving the dynamic interplay between the linguistically shaped self, the breaking through of ineffable Reality, and the proclamation and dialogue that follow upon it (finding form in the "classic") and which in turn transcends conceptual categories (i.e. is again manifestation).

It is when our diverse "language" structures interact that we can finally experience Ultimate Reality as "greater, deeper, wider"⁶ than our particularities, our linguisticity. Such an understanding of Ultimate Reality, or God, is greater than the sum of our particularities, runs deeper than the linguistic shaping of our very selves, and is wider than the wide variety of linguistic forms, cultures, views and opinions out there. But this is not the Universal of modernity, the Great Subject that interacts with "Universal Man" – no, this is the Ultimate Reality that is experienced by humans *in* their particularity, *in* their linguisticity. It is not liberalism's search for common ground, which carries with it the risk of hegemony, nor is it the kind of pluralism that affirms only difference to the point of nihilism, relativism or indifference. Tracy's entire theological project has focused on trying to escape these two equally unsatisfactory alternatives, and thinkers working in his tradition have tried to find a way between the devil of modernity and the deep blue sea of relativistic postmodernity, whether in the field of inter-religious dialogue, ethics, liberation theology, or interdisciplinary work.

So, in conclusion, it seems as if Mr. Brockman's reading of both Tracy and Mahayana Buddhism functions within the modernity/postmodernity debate in the West. He seems to be reading Tracy as an extreme postmodern, caught up in the linguistic turn, thus missing the dialectical relationship Tracy sees between experience and language. He seems to be reading Mahayana Buddhism in terms of Western modernity's search for "pure" truth, thus ignoring the possibility that Mahayana Buddhism might include other

⁶ This phraseology is from Mark Lewis Taylor's "The Executed God", 6-7, where it indicates the notion that God is that which is greater, deeper and wider than the power of political oppression. This understanding of God, or Ultimate Reality, was elegantly expressed by that giant of liberal theology, Paul Tillich, when he depicted God as one's ultimate concern, the "infinite depth and ground of all being" ("The Shaking of the Foundations", 57).

understandings of linguisticity while rejecting instrumentalist notions of language (as Tracy does, and as Wright claims Buddhism does!). In short, I am not at all sure that Tracy and Mahayana Buddhism could not find some epistemological affinities.

But even then, with Tracy, I have to reject the notion of sameness or identity as the starting point of inter-religious dialogue. We cannot even insist on identity as the end of inter-religious dialogue, much less demand it as the starting point. Apparently Tracy is not fazed by the radical otherness of Buddhism, and presumably that would even include difference in epistemology: "a more 'other' form of thought than Buddhist thought on God and self, on history and nature, indeed, on thought itself (including dialogical thought) would be difficult to conceive for Western Christians with our different strategies and categories of philosophical and theological thought" (1990, 69). Tracy does not demand epistemological unity as the starting point for inter-religious dialogue; what is needed, he says, are the following three elements: self-respect (reverence for one's own tradition); self-exposure to the other as other; and the willingness to risk all in the questioning and inquiry that constitutes the dialogue itself (1992, 73). We start in radical difference, and, as to the end, the most we can hope for is the sharpening of our analogical imagination, the possibility of seeing similarities-in-difference. The rhetoric of sameness is typical of Western modernity. But sameness is neither the starting point, nor the end of inter-religious dialogue.

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The Real Beyond Language: A Response to David R. Brockman

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I UNDERSTAND DAVID R. BROCKMAN'S PAPER TO BE A CRITIQUE OF THE PRETENSION to universality of David Tracy's epistemology in the mode of a critique of the limits of inter-religious dialogue. Brockman uncovers a tension between, on the one hand, a Christian theology grounded on the communicative power of language, and, on the other, the Buddhist idea of an Ultimate Reality grounded on a Real beyond language. He refers to this tension as "the Mahâyâna challenge." I agree with the overall trajectory of Brockman's paper. And I think that the concerns he raises are valid. However, I believe that the strength of his critique is weakened by the fact that he, like Tracy, fails to consistently differentiate between "language" and "hermeneutics." But these are two different things.

"Language" refers to a horizon and hermeneutics refers to a particular position within this horizon. "Hermeneutics" is a science – an art if you prefer – rooted in Giambattista Vico's equivalence between the *verum* and the *factum*.¹ Inaugurated by Friedrich Schleiermacher's "empathetic" recreation.² Systematized by Wilhelm Dilthey's *Geisteswissenschaften*.³ And

¹ Vico's principle was intended to replace the classical equivalence between the *verum* and the *esse*. It claims that we know the truth of things we make better than we know the truth of created things. That is, in other words, that the knowledge of things we make is the basis of all our knowledge, the basis, for example, of the knowledge of created things. Or again, that nature is always known in and through history. Giambattista Vico, *L'Antique Sagesse de l'Italie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993), 71-82.

² Drawing on the German Romantic tradition, against Kant's cognitive reductionism, Schleiermacher argues that knowledge is an interpretative task made possible through "empathetic" recreation, that process by which the interpreter transposes him- or herself into the world from which the text derives its mean-

radicalized by Martin Heidegger's analytics of *Dasein*.⁴ The horizon of language refers to a particular configuration of the field of thought, an "epistemic" space, a "paradigm" that sets the rules for knowing, and provides the conditions that make knowledge possible.⁵ That what today is normally referred to as "hermeneutics" should, from the point of view of intellectual history, be more accurately called the "linguistic-turn in hermeneutics" makes the distinction that exists between the two nomenclatures clear.

The failure to properly differentiate between "language" and "hermeneutics" is the fundamental problem of Tracy's epistemology. It is the epistemological symptom of the limits of inter-religious dialogue: Indeed, the pretension to universality of Tracy's epistemology most radically manifests itself as the reduction of the horizon of language to the hermeneutic conception of language. This failure to differentiate between "language" and "hermeneutics," reappears in Brockman's critique as an ambiguity: It is not clear whether Brockman's critique is intended to be a critique of the fact that Tracy situates himself within the horizon of language, or rather a critique of that particular conception of language Tracy labors under, namely, the hermeneutic conception of language. For my response I would like to suggest that the ambiguity of Brockman's critique can be overcome by thinking of "the

ing. Thus, for Schleiermacher, the universality of concepts are not grounded on transcendental categories, but rather on the transcendental of empathetic recreation. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press for the American Academy of Religion, 1977).

³ Dilthey systematizes Schleiermacher's critique of the cognitive reductionism of transcendental philosophy in light of the tension between the nomological and hermeneutical sciences (*Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*). Epistemology, Dilthey argued, should not be grounded in cognition, but rather in the being-there-for-me of the totality of lived-experience. In this way he opens up the possibility of understanding the problem of hermeneutics as the most primordial of all problems of knowledge. Indeed, for Dilthey, nomological explanations are ultimately always grounded on hermeneutical interpretations. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

⁴ It is Heidegger's shift from the transcendental of consciousness to the transcendental of time which makes this radicalization possible. The *locus classicus* of this move is the fifth chapter of the second part of *Being and Time* where Heidegger argues that the purpose of the analysis of the historicity of

Mahâyâna challenge” not as a critique of the linguistic-turn, but specifically as a critique of the hermeneutic conception of language, that is language as presence, disclosure, and understanding, or – to use Martin Heidegger’s well-known metaphor – the idea of language as “the house of being.”⁶

* * *

How are we to understand Tracy’s claim “all understanding is linguistic through and through”? Brockman’s paper is a struggle with this question. Yet Brockman does not address what seems to be the fundamental impediment to properly understanding this claim: namely, that Tracy fails to consistently differentiate between “language” and “hermeneutics.” Tracy vacillates between two contradictory positions: On the one hand, he differentiates between the “linguistic-turn” and “hermeneutics” understood as one among a plurality of different positions within the linguistic-turn. But, on the other hand, Tracy understands the plurality of these positions from within the limits of the hermeneutic tradition. This tension manifests itself most acutely in the third chapter of *Plurality and Ambiguity* “Radical Plurality: The Question of Language.”⁷

Tracy begins this third chapter by acknowledging the “radical plurality” of the “linguistic-turn”: “There are many theories that attempt to explain the uneasy relationships among language, knowledge, and reality. For the moment, let us simply call this the ‘linguistic turn.’ That turn has become an uncannily interruptive exploration of the radical plurality of language, knowledge, and reality alike.”⁸ Yet, two paragraphs down he slips into the hermeneutic conception of language: “As postmodern science emerged...it became clear that science was...a hermeneutic enterprise.”⁹ And again a few lines further: “The alternative to understanding science as a hermeneutic enterprise is to understand it as the one enterprise freed from the complications of interpretation.”¹⁰ But that Tracy situates himself within the limits of the hermeneutic conception of language is most evident from the

Dasein is not to show that *Dasein* is temporal because s/he exists in history, but rather, inversely, its purpose is to show that *Dasein* exists historically because, from the bottom of his or her being, *Dasein* is temporal. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 424-455.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *L’Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) and Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Third Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁶ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” in *Basic Writings* (New York:

claim: “We understand in and through language.”¹¹ This claim, which is almost identical to the one Brockman takes issue with, epitomizes what we shall see is the hermeneutic conception of language as what discloses and thus makes being present to the understanding. Indeed, it is from the perspective of the hermeneutic conception of language that, in the remainder of this third chapter, Tracy engages in a “conversation” with all those other approaches to language that, according to him, have constituted the “linguistic-turn” – e.g., the linguistic (Ferdinand de Saussure), structuralist (Claude Lévi-Strauss), post-structuralist (Jacques Derrida), and discursive (Michel Foucault) conceptions of language.¹²

This obfuscation between “hermeneutics” and “language” is not a subtle terminological issue that can be overcome by a nominalistic point of view, nor is it an arbitrary genealogical question that can be relegated to the history of ideas. This obfuscation is rather the epistemological symptom of the limits of Tracy’s conceptions of “plurality,” “otherness” – indeed, it is the epistemological symptom of the limits of Tracy’s idea of “inter-religious” dialogue. For Tracy posits a “plurality” but excludes the possibility of a radical incompatibility among this plurality. Tracy posits “otherness,” but excludes the possibility of a radical otherness that undermines “inter-religious dialogue.” It is the hermeneutic conception of language, and specifically the assumptions that all differences can be liquidated by a “meta-language” and that all particulars are driven by a “communicative interest” in reaching understanding, that grounds and legitimates this perspective. The claim “all understanding is linguistic through and through” is not just an epistemological fact for Tracy that is it does not simply refer to the conditions of doing theology within the horizon of language. It in addition carries the normative weight of the hermeneutic tradition.

Indeed, the tension between Tracy’s epistemology and Mahâyâna Buddhism does not stem from the fact that Tracy situates himself within the linguistic-turn. The tension uncovered by Brockman stems rather from the fact that Tracy labors under the hermeneutic conception of language: The claim, “all understanding is linguistic through and through” is a problem because it is developed from the hermeneutic point of view. It is the hermeneutic conception of language that is incompatible with the Buddhist idea

HarperCollins, 1977), 213.

⁷ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 47-65.

⁸ Ibid., 47.

of an extra-linguistic reality. The fact that Tracy situates himself within the linguistic-turn simply refers to the latest moment of the movement of modern theology. It simply means that Tracy negotiates the problem of finitude within the horizon of language.

The problem of finitude is what has driven modern theology. This is the problem of a finitude that has annihilated the analogy of being, a finitude that, no longer situated inside the infinite, must now think the infinite as limit. The problem of finitude emerges with the Kantian inversion, with the so-called "Copernican Revolution in Metaphysics."¹³ After Kant theology is forced to come to terms with the conditions of critique, with the conditions of knowledge as crisis.¹⁴ The trajectory of modern theology can be understood as different ways of negotiating the problem of finitude.¹⁵ Thus, to say that Tracy negotiates the problem of finitude in terms of the horizon of language is to situate him in a particular moment of the movement of modern theology.

Tracy does not negotiate the problem of finitude, like Friedrich Schleiermacher and Joseph Maréchal, within the Kantian horizon of consciousness, the horizon of the relative synthetic activity of the knowing subject. That is, he does not formulate the problem of finitude as the Neo-Kantian problem of the historical interpretation of the essence of Christianity or as the Neo-Scholastic problem of the speculative affirmation of the noumenal object.¹⁶ Nor does Tracy negotiate the problem of finitude, like Karl Rahner and Paul Tillich, within the Heideggerian horizon of time, within the horizon of the transcendental imagination's aperture to the being of being as the totality of *Dasein*. That is, he does not formulate the problem of finitude as the philosophico-anthropological problem of the a priori aperture of the human spirit-consciousness to the luminosity of being nor

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹¹ Ibid., 49.

¹² Ibid., 54-65.

¹³ Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1966), 327-328.

¹⁴ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

¹⁵ Manuel J. Mejido, "Reflections on a Theological Crisis," *Social Compass* (Forthcoming, 2004).

as the culturo-historical problem of what undergirds and gives ultimate meaning to the situation.¹⁷ Neither does Tracy negotiate the problem of finitude, like Jürgen Moltmann and J.B Metz, within the Hegelian horizon of the sublation of becoming, within the horizon of the perpetual movement of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be. That is, he does not formulate the problem of finitude as the problem of the dialectical unfolding of the eschatological in and through society and history.¹⁸ No, Tracy does not negotiate the problem of finitude within the horizon of consciousness, *Dasein*, or becoming. Rather he, like, for example, Gordon Kaufman,¹⁹ negotiates the problem of finitude within the horizon of language. Finitude for Tracy means that, from an epistemological point of view, whether we like or not, we are all dependent on language, we are all constituted in and through language. Indeed, finitude for Tracy means that “all understanding is linguistic through and through.”

This horizon of language, moreover, always already implies for Tracy two other epistemological elements: namely, a plurality of particulars and alterity. The first in the sense that it is always a plurality of particular beings that negotiate language. And the second in the sense that the plurality of particular beings discover their finitude by coming- to- terms with one another as Other.²⁰ Language, plurality of particulars, and alterity, these are the basic epistemological coordinates of post-modernity. By situating himself in the horizon of language, Tracy is also situating himself in the postmodern horizon. Or we could simply say that Tracy situates himself in the postmodern horizon of language.²¹

The postmodern horizon of language is the latest way of framing the problem of finitude, it is the latest movement of the problem of knowledge. A modern theology that is worthy of its name is a theology that has come to terms with the conditions of critique. And today a theology that has come to terms with the conditions of critique is a theology that has situated itself within the postmodern horizon of language. Indeed, the fact that Tracy situ-

¹⁶ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Le statut de la théologie* (Paris: CERF, 1994). Joseph Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*, Cahier V, Le thomisme devant la philosophie critique (Louvain: Museum Lessianum, 1926).

¹⁷ Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word* (New York: Continuum, 1994). Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology I & II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-63).

¹⁸ J.B. Metz, *Faith in History and Society* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979). Jürgen

ates himself within the linguistic-turn is not a problem. Again, the tension uncovered by Brockman emerges rather from the fact that Tracy reduces the linguistic-turn to the hermeneutic conception of language: The claim, “all understanding is linguistic through and through” is a problem because it is developed from the hermeneutic point of view. But why this incompatibility between the hermeneutic understanding of language and the Buddhist idea of an extra-linguistic reality?

The reason for this incompatibility stems from the fact that Post-Romantic hermeneutics grants language onto-theological status. For post-Romantic hermeneutics the *logos* is no longer mediated by the Scholastic analogy of being, the Kantian transcendental consciousness, the Hegelian Absolute Spirit, or the early Heidegger’s analytics of *Dasein*. It is rather mediated by language. Hermeneutics still has faith in the universality of the Western *logos*: It is language that discloses the *logos* and makes it present. Indeed, the universality of the *logos* manifests itself in the hermeneutic tradition through the presupposition that everything can be linguistified, the presupposition that in the end language will set things right – a presupposition that is valid only if we accept the onto-theological claim that in the beginning was a meta-language, and that in the beginning this meta-language spoke, constituting the being of all beings.²²

With his delineation of his “phenomenological method” at the outset of *Being and Time*,²³ Heidegger had already laid the ground for his later turn

Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

¹⁹ Gordon D. Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

²⁰ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini: essai sur l’extériorité* (Paris: Brodard et Taupin, 2001), 59-80.

²¹ See, for example, Tracy, *Dialogue With the Other* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990).

²² Here it is evident the affinity (or homology?) that exists between this onto-theological conception of language and the opening verse of the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (1:1).”

²³ This definition needs to be understood as part of Heidegger’s critique of the Neo-Kantian idea of the synthetic activity of the knowing subject which, for example, Ernst Cassirer would defend at Davos in 1929. Against the Neo-Kantians, Heidegger calls for a return to the Pre-Socratic passive openness to *theoria*. From here he defines “phenomenology” as “to let that which shows

to language: "Language is the house of being... [I]n thinking being comes to language."²⁴ But it was Gadamer who, in Part Three of *Truth and Method*, "The Ontological Shift of Hermeneutics Guided by Language," secured the onto-theological status for language with the claims: "Language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs" and "[t]he linguisticity of understanding is the concretion of historically effected consciousness."²⁵ It is precisely this onto-theological idea of language as what discloses and thus makes present being to the understanding that is incompatible with the Mahâyâna Buddhist idea of an Ultimate Reality that exists outside language. While in the West the hermeneutic conception of language may have the positive role of uncovering being, it has in the East the negative role of covering-up Ultimate Reality. Indeed, contrary to the Post-Romantic hermeneutic tradition, it could be said that for Mahâyâna Buddhism not language but rather its absence, *silence*, "is the universal medium in which understanding occurs."

This incompatibility that exists between Post-Romantic hermeneutics and Mahâyâna Buddhism has its radical explanation in the fact that the onto-theological conception of language represents a retreat from that horizon that provided the conditions of possibility for a dialogue between

itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself." *Being and Time*, 49-63. The failure "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself..." is precisely what generates the eclipse of "the question of being," the reduction of the ontological to the ontic. See, for example, Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*, 307-341.

²⁴ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" in *Basic Writings*, 217. For the mature Heidegger *Dasein*'s openness toward the being of being (i.e., ontological) becomes *Dasein*'s openness vis-à-vis language as what mediates the being of being. Indeed, the problem of the reduction of the ontic to the ontological becomes the problem of the manipulation (i.e., objectification) of language, that is the reduction of language to technical language, to the language of technique. Thus, for example, in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," Heidegger states: "Man acts as though *he* were the shaper and master of language. While in fact *language* remains the master of man." Ibid., 348. And, in a less well-known essay on theology and language, Heidegger poses the question: "Is the human being that being that possesses language? Or is it rather language that possesses the human being...?" "Quelques indications sur les points de vue principaux du Colloque théologique consacré au 'Problème d'une pensée et d'un langage non objectivants dans la Théologie d'aujourd'hui,'" in *Débat sur le Kantisme et la Philosophie* (Paris:

Western philosophy and Buddhist thought, namely the horizon of nihilism.²⁶ Buddhism takes as its point of departure what Nishida Kitarô and the Kyoto School have called the “place of absolute nothingness” (*mu no basho*).²⁷ Western philosophy by contrast has historically taken as its point of departure the doctrine of being, a doctrine that has never been far from the Judeo-Christian creationist horizon.²⁸ It was the horizon of nihilism as expressed, for example, through Friedrich Nietzsche’s ideas of the “death of God” and “the eternal return of the same,”²⁹ as well as the early Heidegger’s claim that “the possibility of metaphysics” is “a natural disposition of *Dasein*,”³⁰ that provided the conditions for a Western-Buddhist dialogue to the extent that, as a return to the radical finitude of the human being, nihilism was at the same time a critique of the onto-theological underpinnings of Western philosophy, a critique of, for example, the division of being into eternal and temporal beings, infinite and finite being.³¹ By favoring the transcendental power of language over the “thrown-ness” of *Dasein* Post-Romantic hermeneutics smuggles in a conception of being that fills in the “place of absolute nothingness.”

It is thus not surprising that, understood as a critique of the logocentric metaphysics of presence and thus as an attempt to reinsert Western thought in the horizon of nihilism, post-structuralism has greater affinities with Buddhist thought than does the Post-Romantic hermeneutic tradition. For example, Jacques Derrida’s “*différance*,” as that which creates an empty place for meaning, as that trace of absence, is a better Western approximation of the Buddhist concept of “absolute nothingness.”³² But, perhaps it is the Lacanian conception of language – that is language as lack, dissimulation, Beauchesne, 1972), 128.

²⁵ Geory, *Truth and Method*. Second Revised Edition (London: Sheed & Ward, 1975), 389.

²⁶ Nishitani Keiji, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* (New York: State University of New York, 1990), 180-181.

²⁷ Nishida Kitarô, *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1958), 134-141.

²⁸ Xavier Zubiri, *Sobre el problema de la filosofía* (Madrid: Fundación Xavier Zubiri, n.d.).

²⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New York: Penguin Books, 1961).

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, “Sur la Critique de la raison pure de Kant et sur la tâche d’une fondation de la métaphysique,” in *Débat sur le Kantisme et la Philosophie*, 24.

and alienation, or, to paraphrase Jacques Lacan, the idea of language as the torturer of being – that, in years to come, will prove to be more appropriate.³³ The end of Lacanian psychoanalysis is to liberate the subject from language, or stated positively, to achieve the Real beyond language. It seems to me that a theology grounded upon the Lacanian poststructuralist conception of language would be better suited to engage in a dialogue with a tradition that posits an Ultimate Reality beyond language than is a theology grounded upon the hermeneutic conception of language.

* * *

David Tracy himself has suggested that the post-structuralist conception of language is better suited to serve as the epistemological foundations for the Christian-side of a Christian-Buddhist dialogue than is the hermeneutic conception of language.³⁴ He has, however, made this claim from within the limits of the hermeneutic tradition. By so doing he undermines the notion of “inter-religious dialogue.” For Tracy does not see that the idea of a “conversation” across the different conceptions of language (what he calls, for example, the hermeneutic, linguistic, structuralist, poststructuralist conceptions) is the pretension to universality of a hermeneutic tradition that has expanded to include the idea of “communication.”³⁵ Indeed, to assume that all conceptions of language are driven by a “communicative interest” is to reduce the horizon of language to the hermeneutic conception of language.

The spurious universality of the hermeneutic tradition generates the spurious belief in a universal communicative interest that cuts across religious traditions. But not all religious traditions want to communicate. Some, for example, wish to remain silent, while others wish to transform. This false universality of “inter-religious dialogue” is today generating on the one hand “Western Buddhism,”³⁶ and on the other the historical-hermeneutic reduction of the critically-oriented theological sciences of liberation.³⁷ Both of these dynamics, now as the Westernization of the East (which began with

³¹ Consider, for example, Heidegger’s “task of destroying the history of ontology” at the outset of *Being and Time*.

³² Jacques Derrida, “La différence,” in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1972), 1-29.

³³ Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire*, III, Les psychoses (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981), 276.

³⁴ David Tracy, “The Buddhist-Christian Dialogue,” in *Dialogue With the Other*, 69-94.

the Meiji Restoration) and the assimilation of the Latin American periphery by the Anglo-American center (which has been most recently expressed through the idea of a “free trade area for the Americas”), are today being perpetuated in and through another real that exists beyond language, namely the hegemonic fusion of global liberal-democratic capitalism and post-modern thought.

³⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990).

³⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 13-15.

³⁷ Manuel J. Mejido, “Reflections on a Theological Crisis.”

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Yes, There are Limits
to Tracy's Linguistic Emphasis;
But We Can Only *Talk* About Them
A Response to David Brockman

JONATHAN SEITZ

I ONCE KNEW A SCHOLAR WHO WAS ORDAINED IN EAST ASIAN FOLK AND BUDDHIST religious traditions, and many decades back had been a Jesuit. With thirty years experience in China, Taiwan, and Japan, he was perhaps himself a work in interfaith dialogue. During one class, he tried to explain a Buddhist concept to us. He said:

“When you put a noun to a verb, you sin.”¹

He was trying to explain that in Buddhism any mental judgment or thought—“linguistic”, experiential, or otherwise—is an impediment to enlightenment. The seemingly transparent description of noun and verb invariably interprets and essentializes. In this case, the language of “sin” proper may be foreign to Buddhism, but the term is helpful in pointing to dangers of the hermeneutical turn in everyday experience.

Religious practitioners often provides such critiques of a linguistic approach to knowing or experiencing the divine. The *Dao De Jing* begins famously with the words, “The Tao (Way) that can be told of is not the eternal Tao (Way)” (De Bary: 139). The Buddha cautioned his disciples not to take his judgments at face value, but to test them carefully. Additionally, as Mr.

¹ Class conversation with Michael Saso, Institute of Asian Studies, Beijing (Spring, 1997).

Brockman helpfully reminds us, some forms of Buddhism, such as Yogâcâra, are especially cautious about language, strongly resisting the hermeneutical urge.

We might note that Christians also have recognized the tension between sign and referent, between the textual word and the Word to which it points. Karl Barth, for instance, says that, “[I]t is not merely possible but necessary to appeal from scripture (always recognizing its unique value) to a true and original Word of God which we have to conceive of quite differently. The Church can and should go beyond the representative and preliminary judgment of Scripture to the supreme and real Judge the Lord” (Barth: 540-541). Christians may purport to place more trust in the reliability of these mediating signs than do other faith systems, but they do typically acknowledge limits on the written word. So Brockman is on target in holding something—experience, revelation, *something*—as prior to the hermeneutical turn.

And yet, while I think Brockman is helpful in reiterating this point so emphatically, I believe that this emphasis on the limitations of language is something that Tracy himself has clearly articulated.

TRACY ON THE LIMITS OF LANGUAGE

I begin in noting that for Tracy, a linguistically structured reality is not some ideal. It is instead a de facto recognition by Tracy of the socially constructed—or at least interpreted—nature of reality. Tracy insists that we work methodologically on this linguistic-hermeneutical problem, because in most cases it is our sole means for meeting the world. Tracy himself calls theological interpretation “a highly precarious mode of inquiry” (Tracy 1987, 84), and yet, are there alternatives?

For Tracy, in this reality, the answer is no. He says: “We understand in and through language. We do not invent our own private languages and then find a way to translate our communications to others. We find ourselves understanding in and through particular and public languages” (49). For Tracy, literary and social criticism is crucial to his enterprise because to a large degree the hermeneutical turn is unavoidable.² At another point, Tracy

² See Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, 40, for a discussion of the importance of contemporary literary criticism to theology.

makes a further statement about the problematic nature of language. Hey says, “[E]very word, including every word about words, becomes not merely ambiguous and polyvalent, as Burke sees, but over-determined and disseminating—as Freud saw” (Tracy 1990: 20). In other words, we never really get the “right word” because of the susceptibility of language to ambiguity.

Thus, when Brockman cites Tracy to the effect that “every time we act, deliberate, judge, understand, or even experience, we are interpreting”, I think we must bear in mind that Tracy sees this more as intrinsic to the human experience rather than as an endorsement of the representational power of language. Interestingly, in the same paragraph to which Brockman has drawn such attention, Tracy says that “To experience in any other than a purely passive sense (a sense less than human) is to interpret” (Tracy 1987: 9).

At this point, I think it might be interesting to turn, after a fashion, to an examination of Mr. Brockman’s own use of religious dialogue. Mr. Brockman speaks personally of his experience bringing Trinitarian faith and Zen practice into conversation. Ironically, he seems to argue for a primacy of personal experience—through his own interpretative turn. I think that this reflection, in fact, underscores the degree to which we can access or receive an other’s experience linguistically. I would doubt that any of us passively received Mr. Brockman’s interesting reflection on his experience in the Mahâyâna tradition. We may have wondered at his adherence to Trinitarian faith and non-duality. Or we might have asked ourselves where he gained this experience, where he hopes it will lead, or how it contributes to his studies. Alternately, we might be skeptical that he really experienced anything, curious over whether it was a physical sensation or something more, or hopeful that we might be able to incorporate such practice into our own regimen. Regardless of the questions we ask, however, we will have encountered Mr. Brockman only to the degree that we have experienced, interpreted, and reacted to his words.

I believe that Brockman, in his final paragraphs, implicitly endorses Tracy’s conceptualization of dialogue. Tracy writes that “It is possible that some interpreters may have encountered the power of Ultimate Reality. They may have experienced, therefore, religious enlightenment and emancipation. But these claims can be interpreted only by the same kinds of human beings as before: finite and contingent members of particular societies and cultures” (Tracy 1987: 86). While Brockman acknowledges that he has cer-

tainly not experienced enlightenment, his concluding comments on his own experience seem to endorse Tracy's basic methodology. If he is arguing for limitations on a dialogical and correlative methodology, this argument is *only* accessible to us linguistically. When Brockman has argued that certain "experiences can only be affirmed, confessed, proclaimed" (19), I think that he has missed Tracy's line of thought; affirmation, confession, and proclamation all involve a hermeneutical thrust and a linguistic expression.

NUANCING LANGUAGE: ATTEMPTS AT GOING BEYOND TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS

That said, I believe that Brockman has raised an important qualification regarding Tracy's conception of dialogue. Here also, I think that a close reading of Tracy shows his willingness to enlarge his understanding of dialogue. Tracy's methodology clearly hopes to include arenas other than purely academic forums such as this. Tracy notes, for instance, that the "choice of 'thought' or 'doctrine' as the religious reality chosen for analysis by most philosophers and theologians confines the study of religion, from the very beginning, within too narrow boundaries" (1990: 55). Tracy recognizes the dangers of construing dialogue as white, middle class, or academic, and has argued for a more diverse approach. Of these Others, he says that: "What seems to me to unite so many of these new voices is not a theory of hermeneutics, much less a revised correlational method for theology. Rather it is a new hermeneutical practice which actualizes that theory and that method better than many of the theorists do" (1990: 6). Most recently, Tracy has argued that in the Christian tradition emergent theologies should be granted a place of prominence comparable to the traditional classics.³

³ He says "[A]nd now it seems to me that we theologians must be as interested in Asian thought as the early church was in Greek questions; Africa should interest us as much as the Celtic concerns that freely entered earlier Christian conversations. I think also of how Martin Luther King brought the Declaration of Independence into his own preaching. I remain interested in fragments and forms from all the great traditions" (Holland: 57).

One of the things that is striking about Tracy—especially in his later work—is a renewed emphasis on solidarity. To some degree, Tracy runs the risk of disjoining solidarity and dialogue, or of creating a dialectic between them. He writes that, “What conversation is to the life of understanding, solidarity must be to the life of action” (1987: 113). Thus, at times Tracy does seem to treat hermeneutics as solely a mental activity, where at other times he has treated it more holistically. Nonetheless, Tracy’s response is typically to construe this method quite broadly.

It may be, however, that the best way to maintain the autonomy of a prior experience—interpreted after the fact, to be sure—is simply to acknowledge the limits of language. We do well to follow Tracy’s lead and to dialogue widely and in a variety of media and among many actors, while affirming that aspects of the divine will always resist human mediation.

BUDDHISM IN TRACY & A REFORMED ANALOGY

So far, I have tried to argue that Tracy conceives of linguistic analysis as an imperfect means by which human beings signify the divine. I have further argued that Tracy has proposed dialogue that goes beyond traditional academic, European, or middle class concerns, although he has imprecisely indicated along which lines “solidarity” may flow. Now I hope to turn to the main thrust of Mr. Brockman’s argument—the relationship between Yogâcâra and Tracy’s epistemology.

Tracy himself presents the Buddhist Other as in many ways the most threatening other for monotheists, and Brockman is wise to choose Yogâcâra for contrast, and, of course, analogy. Tracy expresses well the difficulties before us today. He says:

For the Christian or Jew what can be more other than this Buddhist other who names Ultimate Reality not God but Emptiness? This other who declares that there is no self, or, more exactly, with Nâgârjuna, that both and self and no-self neither exist nor do not exist? This Buddhist other who employs a highly metaphysical vocabulary and insists on the need for correct thinking while at the same time suspecting all metaphysical and, at the limit, all language? (1990: 68).

I have to confess that at first I was not quite sure how to proceed with these questions. Luckily, Tracy and Brockman have already pointed to some of the greatest difficulties before us. Despite his protestations of naiveté, Tracy seems to have a strong sense of what is at stake—of what the major themes are—in dialogues with Buddhism.

Brockman is right to emphasize skillful means, the method by which Yogâcârins explain the use of thought structures which, theoretically could lead beyond all mental constructs.⁴ To argue that language is imperfect is not the same as to say that it is useless. This is why, as Tracy notes, Buddhist skepticism of language does not preclude complex and metaphysical discussion.

And yet while the Buddhist Other is perhaps more of a cultural challenge to Christian theology, I think that other examples might continue to highlight the generically problematic and difficult nature of language. In closing, I want to offer up another analogy to pair with Brockman's—one that I believe offers similar challenges. In my own Reformed Protestant tradition, Jonathan Edwards is known for some rather creative theology. Edwards has a famous sermon, "A Divine and Supernatural Light" (based on Mt. 16:17), the doctrine of which he summarizes: "There is such a thing, as a spiritual and divine light, immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means" (Smith et al, 107). I think that Edwards would see this Supernatural Light as prior to interpretation and language, although humans inevitably so interpret it. Edwards might describe the imputation of God's grace as extralingual, and as resistant to normal human language, in his words, "notional." Edwards says, "This light, and this only, has its fruit in an universal holiness of life. No merely notional or speculative understanding of the doctrines of religion will ever bring this." (Smith et al: 124). One of the reasons this sermon is so well known is because of a famous analogy that Edwards uses. He talks about the human experience of tasting honey versus describing it. His exact words are:

⁴ Peter Harvey says it well: "The 'substantialism' of the Yogâcârins is in fact more apparent than real, as their theories on mind are essentially tentative devices, 'skillful means to be used in conjunction with a series of meditations in leading the practitioners beyond all mental constructions, including all theories, to a direct experience of ultimate reality' (106).

Thus there is a difference between having an opinion that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. (Smith et al: 112)

While Edwards will certainly take this analogy in different directions than might Tracy, Brockman, or Asanga, I think that the analogy serves us well.

Like Brockman, Edwards emphasizes the radical disjuncture between language and what Tracy refers to as Ultimate Reality. Like Tracy and many Mahâyânists, Edwards nonetheless sees the value of language. I believe that Tracy has in his most recent work recognized the difficulty of language. He has tended to turn toward the apophatic, and himself acknowledges that he has taken “a shift to the apophatic, the apocalyptic, and also quite importantly to the fragment” (Holland: 55). While he continues to recognize the necessity of language, he also recognizes its limits.

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Response to the Respondents

DAVID R. BROCKMAN

BEFORE I BEGIN MY RESPONSE, I WISH TO THANK MS. BAARD, MR. SEITZ, AND MR. Mejido for taking the time and effort to consider the points raised in my paper and for opening up for me new ways of looking at David Tracy's work and the relationship between language, experience, understanding, and theology. I also wish to express my gratitude to David Tracy himself, for his efforts to open up a space for genuine dialogue between Christian theologians and the wider, contemporary world, including other religious traditions. Our conversation tonight is, in a sense, a celebration of his contribution.

Let me begin my response by talking about what I do not intend to do: that is, to "defend" my paper. Discussions between scholars remind me all too often of trench warfare in World War I: each side digs in (as deeply as possible), and then lobbs mortar shells at the other's equally entrenched position. Out in the middle, in "no-man's land," the main casualty is the truth. This phenomenon is particularly distressing in Christian theologians, for Christ, in his elevation of love of God and neighbor, and in his elevation of the role of service to both, taught a radical openness to the Other, a teaching which seems to call for true dialogue, real conversation.

This is precisely the contribution of Tracy and of what I prefer to call his "conversational" approach to theology, which Ms. Baard summarizes so beautifully as including "self-respect (reverence for one's own tradition); a self-exposure to the other as other; and a willingness to risk all in the questioning and inquiry that constitutes the dialogue itself" (Baard, 12). As Baard

notes, for Tracy “Dialogue is...both rooted in the manifestations of Truth...and can in itself become the occasion for further manifestation” (10).

So, in that spirit, instead of attempting to defend my paper—which after all, is itself a work in progress and only a part of the larger work-in-progress which is my life—I’ll approach this response in two ways: first, what I’ve learned from my respondents; and second, my suggestions for continuing this conversation.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

I have learned much more from my partners in this conversation than can be treated in the short time allotted. So I will restrict myself to three main points.

1) Though we express it in different ways, all four of us agree that the relationship between reality, experience, understanding, and language is subtle and complex—frustratingly so. As Mejido’s paper makes clear, even “language” can be understood in at least two fundamentally different ways: as disclosure (the “hermeneutic” conception), or as lack, as alienation (a Lacanian or post-structuralist conception). Mejido argues quite persuasively that the tension between Tracy’s epistemology and that of Mahâyâna Buddhism stems from the fact that Tracy “labors under the hermeneutic conception of language” (Mejido, 1). This conception presupposes that since the logos as meta-language constituted the being of all beings, it can be mediated by language. Lacan, on the other hand, seeks to free the subject from language and to the Real—an approach which, as Mejido correctly observes, is more compatible with the Yogâcâra position as I understand it. I want to pursue Mejido’s insights further.

2) Both Baard and Seitz have alerted me to an apophatic turn in Tracy’s thought. This is an encouraging development. As Baard presents this turn in Tracy’s thought, it appears that Tracy has moved to address some of the difficulties I find in Tracy’s treatment of language and experience in his earlier work, particularly Plurality and Ambiguity. If, as Seitz puts it, Tracy has come to recognize the limits as well as the necessity of language—and Baard, I think, describes the same development, though in dialectical terms—then Tracy may have found a way to address the challenge of Mahâyâna Buddhism, the challenge of a claim to an experience of the Real beyond language. By the way, this emphasis on the limits of language is consistent with

at least two concepts in Tracy's earlier work: his stress on limit-experience in *Blessed Rage for Order*, and his depiction of the religious "classic" as resistant to "definitive" interpretation (as both Baard and I point out).

3) I appreciate Seitz's use of Jonathan Edwards to underscore my own emphasis both on "the radical disjuncture between language and... Ultimate Reality" and on "the value of language". (Edwards, of course, expresses this point much more eloquently than I do.) I hope to take a look at the works of Edwards which Seitz mentions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

1) As far as I can tell, Baard limits her response to my discussion of a possible problem in Tracy's approach; she does not explicitly engage the final section of my paper, which suggests "skillful means" as a way of reconciling Tracy's seemingly absolute statements with Yogâcâra's approach to reality, experience, and language. Consequently, Baard may have missed what I regard as a resonance between my own reconciliation attempt and her presentation of Tracy's emphasis on what she quite eloquently calls "the mystical, the language-breaking power of manifestation". I'm excited by her presentation of Tracy's "apophatic turn," as reflected in his 1999 lecture here at Princeton. I was not familiar with this work. I'm excited and intrigued by Tracy's recent view of "Ultimate Reality breaking through our linguistic categories, albeit in fragmentary form, and the task of the theologian [as] the gathering of the fragments". Seitz also mentions this apophatic turn in Tracy as a recognition of the limits of language. In further conversation, I would like to hear Baard's thoughts on whether a reading of Tracy's statements as "skillful means" fits with her understanding of Tracy's apophatic turn.

Also, I wonder if this apophatic turn, which Baard sees as in continuity with Tracy's earlier work—two sides of a dialectic—could equally be seen as a departure from his earlier stance, particularly the passages I highlight as problematic in *Plurality and Ambiguity*. If it is a departure, it is one I find healthy and constructive, and more amenable to dialogue with the Other.

2) The real debate here, it seems to me, is between Baard's defense of Tracy and Mejido's critique of Tracy's (and postmodernism's) conception of language. Baard and Mejido push my own assessment of Tracy's approach further, but in opposing directions. I would like to see Baard address Mejido's critique of the hermeneutic conception of language, and Mejido address

whether what Baard presents as Tracy's dialectic between the linguistic turn and the apophatic turn is a move in a Lacanian direction, or at least a move away from a hermeneutical conception of language.

3) Seitz quotes a passage from *Plurality and Ambiguity*: "To experience in any other than a purely passive sense (a sense less than human) is to interpret" (Tracy 1987: 9). Although my paper only dances around the edges of this issue, I agree with Tracy that experience and interpretation are bound up together, at least to a great extent—though not "through and through." However, has Tracy perhaps gone too far in depicting "passive" experience—meaning, I assume, uninterpreted experience—as "less than human?" Since Baard brings up Zen practice, it might be germane to consider whether the Zen use of *kôans*—paradoxical problems that resist solution—have the effect of so frustrating the practitioner's normal processes of interpretation, conceptualization, and analysis that she is opened to what might be called a "purely passive" experience of awakening. (Since I have not personally had such an experience, I have to depend on the accounts of those who claim to have had. And here, as Seitz notes, I depend on their interpretation and their language!) This experience may be understood only through language (using here what Mejido calls the hermeneutical conception) but the experience itself is neither linguistic nor interpreted. Indeed, it is more like the difference mentioned in Seitz's quotes from Edwards, or Lacan's view as described by Mejido. This might be a fruitful area for further conversation about the larger issue of the relationship of experience to language.

American Protestant Pilgrimage: Nineteenth-Century Impressions of Palestine

STEPHANIE STIDHAM ROGERS

DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, THE LAND OF PALESTINE BECAME AN ICONIC place for American Protestants. THE longing for immediate religious experience in the form of direct contact with the roots of Christianity seized the middle class in a new way. Mark Twain labeled that widespread interest in the Holy Land a “craze” or “mania” (Clemens 1869).¹ Feeding this desire, Palestine Park at Chautauqua, NY, a half-acre tract of land outfitted in 1874 with a scaled Jordan River, Galilee, and Jerusalem, allowed late nineteenth-century visitors to stroll symbolically through the land of the Bible – many decked out in “oriental” costume. In addition, popular new parlor pictographs provided touched-up, idealized landscape views of the Holy Land with light commentary. A small-scale city of Jerusalem was “the hit of the fair” at the St. Louis World’s Fair at the turn of the century. For the first time, nineteenth-century church school classrooms posted maps and images of the geographical Palestine, many with idealized representations of Christian biblical events, portraying Christianity as both a historical and geographical religion. With the invention of the steamship, hundreds of Protestant pastors and leaders took Holy Land tours and published travel narratives of their pilgrimages for the eager and interested laity at home, enabling them as readers to take symbolic pilgrimages from the comfort of parlor chairs.

The idea of Palestine raised questions of faith, nature, and national destiny for many Americans. For some, it represented a new American frontier.

¹ This popular book launched Twain’s career. Before its publication he was an obscure San Francisco-based journalist.

Though the physical size of the Holy Land was tiny, miniscule in comparison to the vistas of North America, as a landscape of the psyche the Holy Land was expansive and broad (Davis 1996: 5). The Holy Land was an enduring metaphor that could be made to signify many things, according to the needs of very different situations.

The pilgrimage narratives of the nineteenth century had a vast popular base, and their messages cut across many denominational and social lines. Among the public, there was a “seemingly insatiable” desire for the narratives (Davis 1996: 41). Pilgrimage authors such as Bayard Taylor frequently graced crowded Lyceum lectures promoting their books. These books are the subject of this study. Pilgrimage was rediscovered among American Protestants in the nineteenth century and became a popular Protestant practice as Palestine was rediscovered as a highly symbolic, iconic place. Protestant pastors, in a popular new Christian travel narrative genre, re-imagined Palestine and its Arab population in ways that form the background of modern Protestant pilgrimage to Israel and Protestant perspectives towards the Middle East, illuminating a phenomenon that has shaped Protestant attitudes towards Islam and the settlement of Palestine. Their tourist gaze focused upon the distant biblical past, and representations of the “foreign” soil of Palestine were often grounded in the observer’s perception of self (Davis 1996: 26).

Protestant pilgrimage is a phenomenon that has not been as widely studied as its Catholic counterpart. A comparison of Catholic and Protestant pilgrimage is fruitful—the more playful, communal nature of Catholic pilgrimage stands in sharp contrast to the solemn and commercial tone of Protestant pilgrimage. Most importantly, Protestant pilgrimage in the nineteenth century, unlike Catholic pilgrimage, was managed primarily by Protestant clerics and presented in a packaged form in the genre of the mass-marketed pilgrimage narrative.

PROTESTANT PILGRIMAGE AND LIMINALITY

According to Victor and Edith Turner, the religiously symbolic liminal phenomenon of pilgrimage is found in tribal religions as well as among the major religions of the world. The Turners view pilgrimage as a liminal behavior that is most prominent among the highly organized, historical reli-

gions. Although they study Catholic Marian pilgrimage, many of their observations shed light in a comparative fashion on the radically different forms that Protestant pilgrimage has taken. Liminality, often associated with the young, adolescent boy who moves to a hut outside the village during a rite of passage, is found in all societies, both modern and traditional, and is associated with transition and potentiality (Turner 1978: 4). In the Turners' theory, liminality is associated with creativity and play, and is the seedbed of social change. They argue that for Christians, liminality has not been associated with the sacred hut, but rather with a pilgrimage to a distant place from the Christian's primary place of residence, a pilgrimage that becomes a complex surrogate for the journey to the source and heartland of the faith. While monastics make interior journeys as a part of daily life, pilgrims exteriorize their mysticism through a penitential journey that is often freely chosen as a way to slough-off systemic sins and nagging guilt that cannot be relieved in the local confessional.

The pilgrim's journey in the Christian faith is thought to be an ellipse rather than a straight line. In other words, the journey home is quite different from the journey outward. At the end of a pilgrim's journey, she or he will be exposed to powerful religious sacra and will be temporarily released from the normal binding structures of daily life (Turner 1978: 9). While tribal initiates seek a deeper commitment to the structural life of the community and enjoy enhanced status upon their return from a liminal experience, Christians often seek temporary release from the community and only sometimes are able to enhance their mundane status by having made the pilgrimage. Because Christian pilgrimage can intensify the traveler's attachment to her or his faith, many pilgrimages become crusades of some sort – either literal or symbolic (in the form of social protest) – when the pilgrim returns.

The climax of Christian pilgrimage is the moment of approach to the sacred altar or site wherein the pilgrim is momentarily transformed into the savior and the redemptive tradition through a process of identification with the divine. This moment makes up the converse of a ritual of affliction, wherein a Christian emphasizes their alienation from the holiness of God. Instead, the pilgrim has a moment of powerful recognition and identification with religious sacra.

PILGRIMAGE AND PROTESTANT LITERATURE AND THEOLOGY

One literary image of Christian pilgrimage can be found in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a collection of stories about a group of unrelated persons crossing paths on their journeys spending time together in nonpermanent, associational relationships. Similarly, pilgrimage groupings in Protestantism during the nineteenth century are often associational rather than primary. A different literary model is found in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, where the individual soul on the path of life is in direct relationship to God, a relationship surpassing even the most elemental human social relationships such as marriage and parenthood. Always a popular image among Protestants, the idea of life as a pilgrimage is also central to nineteenth-century Methodist hymnody. Methodist hymn writers of the nineteenth century transformed displacement into a religious virtue, wherein the Christian is a wandering stranger in the world, or the world is seen as an alien wilderness in the greater pilgrimage of life (Valenze 1985: 29). When pilgrims return from "wilderness" wanderings to their primary lives, they may experience enhanced religious status, but overall may have lost status in the realms of work and human relationships due to their long absence. While tribal patients draw kin and healers closer to them in order to be cured, in the West pilgrims go out and separate from kin in the process of religious or spiritual healing (Turner 1978: 16).

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the genesis of the Zionist movement, as well as increased popular acceptance among Protestant Americans for the establishment of the Jews in their "homeland." This feeling was most prominent among evangelical premillennialists, although it may also be found among the liberal, intellectual elite such as Philip Schaff and Henry Van Dyke. Mainline, liberal postmillennialists and the premillennialists of the Bible conferences and popular evangelicalism fought vitriolic battles during the second half of the nineteenth century over the role of Palestine in millennial Christian thought. At the middle of the nineteenth century, postmillennialism was the most widely accepted Protestant idea, yet by the twentieth century it would be the minority view. According to James Moorhead,

The postmillennialist hermeneutic was profoundly ambiguous. It wanted to treat the hope of the Apocalypse partly as a figurative truth and partly as literal. Against the premillennarians, for example, postmillennialists fought verse by verse, insisting that prophecy had a spiritual rather than carnal ful-

fulfillment. Prophecies of a political kingdom for the Jews were types of Christianity's religious influence (Moorhead 1999: 29).

Postmillennialists sought ever-renewed progress in a "kingdom without end" that de-emphasized supernaturalism while extolling the virtues of constant, unending kingdom-building activity. On the other hand, the masses of Protestant Christians were entranced by the millennialist idea that they lived in the end times. They viewed most events in the Middle East through an apocalyptic lens, while some liberal Protestants opted for a more symbolic interpretation of end-time prophecies, choosing not to reproduce what they considered the "mistake" of first-century Christians who erroneously assumed that Christ would return during their lifetime (Moorhead 1999: 185).

During World War I, "millenarians grew more aggressive.... the ideal of a constantly improving world [espoused by many postmillennialists], in which presently peace would reign, had been shattered" (Moorhead 1999: 173). Shirley Jackson Case gave evangelical opponents a name—"the premillennialist menace"—and mainstream Protestants spilled much ink in order to decry the idea that the kingdom would be ushered in by force rather than persuasion. According to James Moorhead, for the mainstream postmillennialists, premillennialists represented a delusional mindset that tried to "resuscitate ancient millenarianism with its primitive world view." Yet postmillennialists were thought to represent "an inconsistent attempt to unite modern spirituality with the primitive view" by evangelicals (1999: 182). During the late nineteenth century, which Moorhead calls "the Secular Great Awakening," liberal Protestants would place great faith in the new knowledge available through the modern sciences. Yet premillennialism pulled in the masses of Christians because they liked the connection that premillennialists made between current events and biblical prophecy. Hotly debated topics such as the end times and the newly rediscovered Holy Land of Palestine underscored wider debates between liberals and evangelicals.

Not all evangelicals were premillennialists, but by 1875 premillennialism began to gain wide acceptance among evangelicals and other American Protestants. They began to argue for a strict separation between Israel and the church as two distinct peoples of God, and that God had a plan for "Israel" – by which they meant modern Jewry – which did not exclude the then Ottoman district of Palestine (Weber 1987: 156-7). In the years before World War I, premillennialists saw the increase in Zionism as fulfillment of end-

time prophecy. Indeed, there are surprising links between premillennialists and early Zionists – showing collaboration at both early and later stages (Vogel 1993: 32-9). Premillennialist evangelicals were able to win the hearts of the American public in the decades before World War I because they were able to fit current events and biblical prophecy together in a way that was meaningful to the average churchgoer (Weber 1987: 128-9). When British General Allenby “conquered” Jerusalem in 1917, premillennialists gloated over the events that seemed to prove their eschatological interpretations.

LIMINALITY, PILGRIMAGE AND SOCIETY

Ecclesiastical battles aside, Protestant pilgrimage became a cultural craze among Protestants of almost every stripe during the nineteenth century. Victor and Edith Turner hold that the epoch of genesis of a particular pilgrimage is of crucial significance in determining the development of that pilgrimage. The second half of the nineteenth century is the epoch of genesis of popular American Protestant pilgrimage, a formative moment that may be carefully scrutinized for patterns and symbolism. Nineteenth-century pilgrimage is modern (as opposed to medieval) pilgrimage, because it is most often “antimodern,” or a part of the “fervent faith and apologetic against advancing secularism of the post-Darwinian world” in which “the sacred has contracted” (Turner 1978: 18). Nineteenth-century pilgrimage among Protestants is not only evangelical in tone, it is also intimately related to a broader culture of leisure tourism, where people seek an almost sacred, often symbolic mode of *communitas*, which is generally unavailable to them in structured life.

On the way home from a pilgrimage, pilgrims have sloughed off structural sins and can relax and enjoy themselves. What is the role of leisure-tourism in pilgrimage? Many pilgrimage sites of the twentieth century are laden with the trappings of consumer commercialism and the opportunity to buy – vestiges from the 1890s when America was reborn as a money-spinning, shopping empire. Yet during the mid-nineteenth century, the souvenir, this enduring element of pilgrimage (and perhaps all travel), was also crucial. The recorded presence of religious memento hawkers outside of a Christian religious site testifies to this ancient traveling tradition and the eagerness to buy. For example, one 1838 traveler returned to Germany with “rosaries,

mother-of-pearl tablets, crucifixes, petrified olives, and peas, and a certificate of his visit to the Holy Sepulcher” (Shepherd 1987: 171). At home, the themes of the East and Orient were the hottest ideas for early department store marketing because for many the East symbolized a sensuality that Judeo-Christian culture lacked (Leach 1993: 104-11). During the nineteenth century, travel was often justified as a repair for ill health rather than for enjoyment’s sake alone. Travel to Palestine was defensible as an especially worthy use of time due to its religious significance.

Protestant pilgrims of the second half of the nineteenth century were able to use a variety of symbols to relay their experiences to would-be pilgrims who purchased their narratives. Narratives of the Holy Land provided a “baptized” alternative to the department store environments which popularized a sensual “Garden of Allah” setting while selling Eastern-influenced fashions. Yet the symbols that Protestant pastors used were those of the biblically-educated clerical class, rather than those of ordinary pilgrims. Nevertheless, they appeared to have a broad, sensational appeal.

In pilgrimage narratives written by Protestant pastors, visible images of the Holy Land were translated into popular theological frameworks. Therefore, the nature of pilgrimage, which in Catholicism is thought to be democratic rather than hierarchical, is perhaps significantly altered in the Protestant case. While the pilgrimages of Catholic peasants of this time are now regarded as anarchical and anticlerical with a populist message—linked to popular nationalism, millennialism, and peasant revolt—the Protestant case is quite the reverse. Protestants tended to send their clerics on the journey to encounter the powerful religious sacra of the pilgrimage, in order to deliver it to the religious congregation at home. Therefore, the experience of *communitas* is almost nonexistent, and the association with laicization, described by Jonathan Sperber in his study of popular religious life among Northern European Catholics during the nineteenth century, certainly does not seem to apply.

Sperber discusses popular pilgrimage in the context of the empowerment of the laity apart from the official church, and the experience of revivals among common people such as artisans and bourgeoisie – often to the dismay of priests who concurrently reported lowered church attendance (1984: 14). One nineteenth-century priest describes a mass of pilgrims at a popular Dutch shrine:

In addition to all these problems, there is the annoying mish-mash, at least in Kevelaer. In one place, people are chattering away, in another they are praying-in Dutch, or, a few steps away, in German. In one spot people are singing, in another they are wailing. While all this is going on, things are being sold or traded, people are drinking and eating, etc. (quoted in Sperber 1984: 18).

This excerpt from a frustrated priest concerned with bringing order to religious practice at a pilgrim's shrine illuminates the festive, often communal atmosphere of popular Catholic pilgrimage. Furthermore, frustrated parents and community leaders near Kevelaer complained that their young adult children begged incessantly to go on pilgrimages and frequently gathered at the unruly sites. By the mid-nineteenth century, Prussian bureaucrats, "the self-styled architects of economic growth and rational social structure," organized active political opposition to pilgrimage as an archaic practice that was harmful to economic development. Calculating leaders sought to liaison with priests in order to lump together processions and pilgrimages and to confine them to Sundays when no one was working (Sperber 1984: 25). Pilgrimage was feared and mistrusted by both Catholic and Protestant religious leaders as "antimodern" and as opposed to positive economic growth and a hardworking, vigilant attitude normally associated with the Protestant ethic of hard work, thrift, and saving, because of its connection to vacation time.

The overarching concern about popular pilgrimage during the nineteenth century in northern Europe by clerics and business leaders contrasts with the general enthusiasm among Protestant pastors for their own pilgrimages to Palestine and the popular books they subsequently published. Rather than bringing revolt, revival and anti-clericalism, they served to bolster the position of Protestant pastors as interpreters and managers of religious phenomena to the masses.

For Victor and Edith Turner, themselves frequent Catholic pilgrims, the domestication of pilgrimage by clergy represents the omnipresent attempts of religious specialists to domesticate the primitive because manifestations of *communitas* are potentially subversive and threatening to clerical status and orderliness. Clerics have historically sought to transform pilgrimage into a neater phenomenon that is more susceptible to ecclesiastical control (1978: 32). Western pilgrimage has become more solemn in tone and is often effectively mediated by travel agencies which provide tour guides with a

commercial goal in mind. As this transformation of pilgrimage has occurred, the promises of liminal experiences are no longer necessarily available, no matter how much they are promised or advertised.

The liminoid or playful, communal element of pilgrimage is attractive because it promises a release from mundane structure and a homogenization of status among pilgrims in addition to a release from ordinary time. The liminoid resembles, without being identical to, the liminal. It is an independent domain of creative activity and is associated with anti-structure and can “generate and store a plurality of alternative models for living, from utopias to programs, which are capable of influencing the behavior of those in mainstream social and political roles” (Turner 1979: 27).

Pilgrims in a liminal process will maintain simplicity of dress and behavior and will often expect some sort of ordeal at some point in the pilgrimage process. Liminality brings a reflection on basic values and the emergence of an integral person from multiple personae. Indeed, the movement or travel that pilgrimage entails in itself goes against stasis and structure, and the pilgrim’s devotion brings a natural comradeship among fellow travelers. Mircea Eliade writes that the road and walking can be transfigured into a religious experience, because every road can symbolize “the road of life,” or a peregrination to the center of the world:

If possessing a house implies having assumed a stable situation in the world, those who have renounced their houses, the pilgrims and ascetics, proclaim by their “walking,” by their constant movement, their desire to leave the world, their refusal of any worldly situation. The house is a “nest,” and . . . the “nest” implies flocks, children, and a “home,” in a word, it symbolizes the world of the family, of society, of getting a living (Eliade 1959: 183-4).

Eliade highlights the aspect of movement and danger against stasis and stability in the nature of pilgrimage. What Victor Turner calls “the whole field” of pilgrimage includes the nonritualized factors as well as the ritualized ones, i.e., the “play” times of travel and enjoyment. Liminal pilgrimage does not serve the static status quo; rather, it recollects an alternative, more fluid mode of social being and a world where *communitas*, rather than a bureaucratic social structure, is preeminent (1978: 37).

Turner examines pilgrimage as a rite of passage. Such a rite of passage includes three stages: separation, or leaving a previous social status, transition or passing through an area of ambiguity, and incorporation wherein the subject is re-aggregated into their well-defined position in a stable soci-

ety. Unlike initiations which permanently elevate subjects after temporarily humbling them, pilgrimages transiently elevate those with low status before returning them to their permanent humbleness (Turner 1979: 16).

The element of play is crucial to the spiritual work of pilgrimage. (As Turner writes, “the work of men is the work of the gods.”) In the liminoid process of pilgrimage, cultural elements are recombined in numerous ways. People “play” with the basic tenets of familiar religious faith and de-familiarize them. The “liminoid” resembles (without being identical to) the liminal—it is a distorted mirror-image, mask, or cloak for the structural activity in the “centers” or “mainstreams” of productive social behavior (1979: 27). This anti-structure can generate and store alternative models for living, which in turn speak back to the behavior of mainstream roles in society.

Turner writes that the differentiation between work and leisure brought by John Calvin and other reformers during the Protestant Reformation lowered the importance of special festival-like events such as pilgrimage, while sacralizing a person’s worldly occupation as the sphere in which to serve God. In bringing about this change, reformers sacralized what was formerly the most profane, and profaned what was formerly sacred – the festivals, cakes, and ale of popular religious life (Turner 1979: 33). The ideal of hard work in one’s calling promoted ascetic dedication to systematic profits and thrift, hardly a friendly atmosphere for the excesses and lengthy absences required by traditional pilgrimage practices. Thus, after the Reformation, “play” is a form of moral laxness, and Protestant pilgrim travel takes on a notably serious and holy tone of “work” in comparison to common folk pilgrimage among Catholics.

If the liminality of pilgrimage is “the acme of insecurity, disorder, and chaos” among Protestant divines, it follows that pilgrimage would undergo a radical transformation at their hands during the nineteenth century as they were writing pilgrimage narratives. Indeed, most narratives reaffirm traditional doctrines and the established Protestant church.

For Turner, the concept of the liminoid includes moments when the germ of the future, social change, and the liberation of human capacities and creativity occur. The liminoid is “an institutional pocket or capsule which contains the germ of future social developments” (1979: 41-2). As a moment when time flows openly and freely, liminoid processes are the difficult to duplicate objects of desire.

Liminality, nevertheless, undergoes a transformation in highly complex societies wherein it is not only removed from a rite of passage context but is

also individualized. In these instances, which are mirrored in the production of mass-produced pilgrimage narratives by Protestant pastors, the solitary person creates the liminoid phenomena, and the collectivity experiences the collective liminal symbols (Turner 1979: 51). In this process, the experience of *communitas* by the pastor will be recorded as the memory of *communitas*, wherein a particular social structure may be argued from the experience since it has the authority of liminality, a type of commodity. Therefore, the religious elite will convey the holy or liminal to their congregations in a way that will speak to that society in a desirable fashion, or a manner that will not undercut their own religious position and authority. How will the symbols of the Holy Land become relevant to social action? As my previous work shows, the prestige of the Holy Land and Christian pilgrimage often served an anti-Catholic agenda, an anti-Arab or Orientalist mindset, and bolstered popular millennialism, to name a few (Rogers 2000: 221-52). Holy Land pastor-pilgrims of the nineteenth century report a loss of ego, as they are immersed in the sacred setting of the Bible, wherein the delights of the experience outweigh the considerable danger and problems.

THE PROTESTANT PASTOR AS HONORARY PILGRIM

The nineteenth-century Holy Land pilgrimage experience is often recorded almost as a stage play wherein the pastor as religious hero embarks on a dangerous association with sacral phenomena. Original Christianity, the faithful landscape of the Bible, falls under his "gaze." The boundary ambiguity on the part of the pastor when overseas is dangerous because it could be associated with a form of pollution, as sort of "going native" outside of the local context. In a careful balancing act, the pastor/narrator must mirror the revealed truths of Christianity as they are practiced at home, while claiming to experience them in an entirely new and revealing way. Since the sphere of religious ritual was contracting in Victorian society, travel was becoming a new nexus of the important work of liminal play. By baptizing certain forms of travel to the Near East as particularly religiously symbolic and holy, pastors could reclaim an area that hinted of the profane (travel and tourism) for the sacred, a sort of "Christian" vacation. Yet it was perhaps the same Victorian pastors who contributed to the process of secularization by defining the world outside of the church as "secular."

Nineteenth-century pastors in the Holy Land reported dramatic, life-altering encounters with the religious past and their own heritage. Such encounters leave open the question as to whether the unprecedented will provide the 'terminal meaning' of the situation (Turner 1979: 93). Pastors interpreted the meaning of the Holy Land for the members of their congregations back at home, and this meaning would have a direct bearing on their understanding of the original faith unmarred by tradition. The narratives, as a form of public liminality, would enact in a dramatic form for readers the ritual of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage, understood as a process "betwixt and between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending" would yield a moment of potential, a time of enchantment with the faith when anything might happen (Turner 1979: 97). Victor Turner views such moments as an advance in the history of human freedom, since they can expose injustices and inefficiencies in mainstream structures.

Protestant pastors would speak back to their congregations about political issues at home that came into clearer focus while they were abroad. This is because pilgrims leave a domain where relations are complex for one far-away where they are believed to be simpler. The straightforward truths of Christianity would become more apparent in Palestine, away from the trappings of a modern industrial society. The pastors would not become interconnected with other pilgrims on their journeys. Rather, their relationships while there would be ones of similarity of purpose, meaning, etc. (Turner 1979: 122). Palestine became a stage wherein religious people looked for meaning. Ownership and control of holy sites in Palestine would reflect out upon the wider world, providing enhanced status at home. The Muslim control of Palestine was repeatedly decried by Protestant pastors as a slap in the face to Judeo-Christian dominance and preeminence in the world.

In Palestine, the Roman Catholic Church, Protestants, Armenians, Jews, and Muslims hotly contested the centers of pilgrim devotion during the nineteenth century. In one instance, popular Presbyterian minister T. DeWitt Talmage bartered heavily to purchase the site he believed was the original Calvary from the "Mohammedans" for "the sake of all Christendom" (Talmage 1893). This impulse to control meaningful, iconic sites can be related to the magnitude of public devotion related to these sites. Such sites are often connected to social and political conflicts due to their heavily symbolic nature. The sites are not thought to be holy in themselves, as some have

³ For a more detailed analysis of these causal forces, see Wilson 1996.

assumed; rather, they are symbols of the higher power that lies beyond them, and often weigh heavily in the hearts of wider public opinion. Many groups anxiously sought control of key sites because these images and sites were crucial in the collective unconscious and performed therapeutic functions in society, serving to redress unwholesome imbalances in human life. Protestants did not have local control or a historical presence in Palestine until after 1917, when British General Allenby made his famous victorious walk from the coast of Palestine to Jerusalem. Under British mandate, Protestants quickly established multiple holy sites all over Palestine – sites which they still maintain and control.

It is not surprising that clerics and governmental organizations continually vied for power over these areas. Jonathan Sperber writes that “public opinion” became a new factor to consider in political and governmental control for the first time during the nineteenth century, as universal male suffrage became increasingly widespread in the West. Sacred sites would thus often become pawns in the quest for the approval of the public or one’s religious group.

Why do precious locales weigh so heavily in the hearts and minds of believers? Victor Turner considers the realm of the liminal, the locale of pilgrimage, to be the site of potentiality for social change because of the association with creativity and the free flow of time in process. Pilgrimage can be a rite of passage for Christians in the West wherein liminality is experienced and new perspectives emerge for the believer. Certainly, the authors of Protestant pilgrimage narratives report emotionally and spiritually significant experiences. In general, they report the thrill of having traveled back in time to a primitive past, where they can view Arabs as they have existed unchanged for centuries and witness the events and setting of the Bible. They report a new, deepened experience of their faith after the intense experience of visiting the land.

These Protestant ministers and other pilgrims published narratives of their journeys for eager audiences newly enthralled with the power of the press as a vehicle for the spread of Protestant ideas during the nineteenth century. Activist Protestants believed that a new era of missions had emerged in which the limitations of manpower would be transcended by the ability to reach thousands through massive printing projects and tracts such as pilgrimage narratives.

THE POWER OF THE PROTESTANT PRESS

David Morgan writes that by the early nineteenth century, Protestants had gone through a radical transformation from an emphasis upon hearing and listening (to sermons, etc.) to a preference for mass-produced visual representation and religious writings. This helps to explain the large number of mass-produced pilgrimage narratives from this period. In the midst of this process, “belief was converted into graphic information and disseminated cheaply over great distances . . . and an ever-expanding infrastructure of distribution” (Morgan 1999: 6). According to Morgan, mechanical reproduction democratized visual response, making Christian art available to almost everyone in home or Sunday school classroom. The copies do not suffer from lower status than the original; in fact, they are fully invested with the power of the original. While some have argued that there is an inevitable “loss of aura” when an image or item is mechanically reproduced, Morgan holds that reproduction performed quite the opposite function, bringing the viewer to the very subject of the image, such as the places of the Bible. Furthermore, the reproductions helped to infuse the original with more sacral power, since Protestants thought that the means of reproduction were transparent or unintrusive (1999: 8).

Thus, face-to-face encounters were fashioned out of a desire to use images to shape character – especially that of youth. The precondition of such mass reproductions by Protestant pastors was public consumption fueled by images that perpetuated desire and made satisfaction appear possible. Morgan suggests that the tract societies of the second and third decades of the nineteenth century invented the American mass media, because they were deeply convinced in the power of the media to effect social change. Not necessarily an instrument for domination, such media exerted influence rather than control. Tractarians argued that they wished to use the press to return the church to its primitive purity and linked tract distribution to the practices of Luther and other reformers. Their ultimate desire was to place in the hands of each person on earth the changeless truths of Christianity, concisely written and accessible (Morgan 1999: 27). According to Morgan, it is difficult to overstate the optimism of those who sought to use the mass medium of the press for benevolent ends. Similarly, Protestant pilgrimage narratives of Palestine were intended to uplift and affirm while satiating the new curiosity about the unexplored East of the biblical past.

Such a positive apprehension of the power of the press to effect positive results in society is the background for the widespread publication of pilgrimage narratives. While consumers of the narratives often believed that the transmission of the pilgrimage experience was transparent or unobtrusive, pilgrimage narrative writers were aware of the broad appeal of their writings and sought to provide a dramatic spiritual encounter with the essential truths of Christianity for their readers. In the wake of the modernist controversy, pastors could reaffirm and symbolically witness the seemingly undeniable testimony of geography, which they commonly referred to as the "fifth gospel," written in stone.

Was there a "loss of aura" (to use Morgan's phrase) as the pilgrimage experience was recorded and cheaply disseminated in book form by well-meaning pastors? Certainly, if pilgrimage is intended to be a personal encounter with powerful religious sacra at the site of the religion's founding. The traditional pilgrimage ideal of leaving one's own home for new acquaintances or comrades on the pilgrim's road cannot be reached by reading a mass-produced book, except perhaps in one's guided imagination. In addition, the experience of cleansing from one's sins would certainly be watered down if one has not personally undertaken the labors of pilgrimage. Finally, the radical, anticlerical, communal element of pilgrimage that has been associated with millennialism and peasant revolt would not be available in a book written by a cleric about a cleric's experiences. For these reasons, pilgrimage narratives represent a reversal of ancient Christian pilgrimage traditions, forming a more top-down experience for seekers, with clergy translating the meaning of the event.

DOMESTICATING THE PRIMITIVE: CLERGY AND PILGRIMAGE

The historical widespread antipathy of clergy to the practice of pilgrimage is perhaps strongly expressed in this form of co-opted pilgrimage in which the reader hopes to travel to the Holy Land, or has the desire to go to the site of powerful religious sacra, but instead receives a managed and pre-digested experience controlled and orchestrated by the professional clergy. This reality only becomes apparent when one considers the centuries-old history of pilgrimage, which has been associated with laicization and popular revival wherein laypersons take charge of their own spiritual development. The symbols of pilgrimage such as the Holy City of Jerusalem, the site

of the crucifixion, and the boyhood home of Christ in Nazareth are thus coming from the religious elite to the laity, rather than emerging from the laity's individual, personal connection and interest in special sites, areas, and symbols.

The nineteenth-century pilgrimage experience, available for purchase from a local store and readable from the comfort of one's own home, was a far cry from the experience of journeying by foot and in boats, over land and sea, to the homeland of the faith in order to personally encounter the powerful connection of religious sacra to the site of a historical religion. One is not released from mundane structures and healed from systemic maladies, and the connection to local clergy and places of worship is strengthened and maintained rather than damaged. *Communitas*, other than imagined, is completely broken down in the experience of reading a book. For Turner, *communitas* is a connection to the sacred or the holy because "it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency" (1969: 128).

It is also of interest to note that women historically favored pilgrimage as a type of piety. From Egeria of Spain in the early church to Margery Kempe of late Medieval England, such an act of piety was often chosen and favored by women. In contrast, pilgrimage narratives of the nineteenth century among Protestants were almost without exception written by men, even though some women accompanied their husbands on such tours, while a few other women traveled independently. In contrast, among Catholic popular pilgrimage in Latin America and Europe, pilgrims are disproportionately female.

The Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca has a broader appeal: it is thought to be universally desirable for both women and men. Christian pilgrimage narratives of the nineteenth century were often read by women, but almost never written by them. These women, as pilgrimage narrative consumers, stand out in history for their willingness to let others take pilgrimages on their behalf, or their unwillingness or inability to do so themselves combined with a desire and an interest in the topic. According to Turner, the *communitas* of pilgrimage is often characterized by a decreased emphasis upon sexual differences and a suspension of kinship rights and behaviors – elements appealing to many women bound to traditional roles by their societies (1969: 111). Therefore, as pilgrims, women have been freed of some of the binding norms, which may have held them captive in their homes. Yet when a woman

reads a pilgrimage narrative, she has not been set free from any of the strictures of daily life. Women were the primary market for these narratives, which were written by men.

In this instance, a traditional women's area of Christian piety is co-opted, pre-interpreted, and divorced from personal experience. Instead of the freeing experience of release from communal norms, the local norms are reinvested and affirmed, baptized with the status of pilgrimage. It is interesting to note the sheer lack of local pilgrim sites for North American Christians during the nineteenth century in contrast to those of Europeans. It is perhaps due to the overwhelming emphasis emerging during the nineteenth century upon the distant Holy Land overseas, a trip too difficult and expensive for many women, that American Christian women did not develop this type of pious practice.

For much of Christian history, pilgrimage has been a form of popular religion tied to Marian devotion because such piety is non-literate, open to anyone who seeks non-written, non-verbal forms of symbolic practice. Because both the Lutheran and Reformed traditions so highly favored the verbal and written modalities, the visual and experiential aspect of faith was widely rejected. As John Dillenberger aptly writes, "The visual as the Bible of the illiterate or the unlearned, as the older tradition expressed it, has been transformed into the visual illiteracy of the learned" (1999: 91). It is therefore ironic that the personal experience of pilgrimage by Protestant pastors would be transformed into a written form, namely, the pilgrimage narrative, among nineteenth-century Christians so that they could more properly read about pilgrimage rather than experiencing it themselves.

Many middle class members of the laity and popular public figures such as former presidents and generals, however, would make their own pilgrimages to Palestine in increasing numbers as the nineteenth century continued. The opportunity was available to middle-class people for the first time in centuries after the invention of the steamship in the 1840s. After the Saracenic invasion of Palestine, European Christians had been obliged to recreate holy sites at home through the careful placing of relics and the witness of miracles associated with them, because Holy Land travels were almost impossible. In the fourth century, Constantine built a shrine at the site of the crucifixion that was important among early Christians. This shrine was totally destroyed by Arabs in the eleventh century, and the crusaders later covered the area with a smaller building in the twelfth century, which evoked centuries of devotion for nineteenth-century pilgrims (Sox 1985: 201).

Nineteenth-century Protestants complained about the turf-wars and doctrinal strife at this key site controlled by five ancient rival groups: the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Armenians, Syrians, Copts, and Ethiopians. Nineteenth-century Protestants also often eschewed the popular shrines of Palestine, many of which were steeped in the traditions of the Middle Ages and were popularized by Franciscans (i.e., the Bethlehem stable, the mount of the beatitudes, etc.). Instead they sought what they called “the out-of-doors gospel” in a direct experience with nature. They sought the images of childhood Bible illustrations, often anxiously searching in vain, while rejecting the gilded, incense-filled chapels set up by the Eastern traditions.

Meccan pilgrims wear the clothing on their pilgrimages that will be their death shroud. The ideal in this case is that they may present themselves at the last judgment covered with their “ihram” pilgrim’s garb. The idea of holy geography is critical to the Islamic faith, and their history, like that of Christians, is also one of conquest, victory, and defeat. While Christian pilgrimage has historically been less critical in the life of the believer, has had less connection with assurance of salvation, and has been seen as less necessary than is the pilgrimage to Mecca among devout Muslims. Pilgrimage is an early Christian practice first attributed in the second century that has historically endured, whether on a local level or in connection to a longer journey, due to its popular appeal and the important meaning assigned to particular regions of the world. The nineteenth century set the stage for the broad public acceptance of the land of Palestine as a spiritual homeland for Judeo-Christian peoples. It also set the stage for our inability to empathize with a more universal idea of connection to sacred locales among those whose claims may be at odds with our own views of religious past and future.

Popular pilgrimage has historically been democratic, anarchical, anticlerical, and populist in tone – linked to popular nationalism and millennialism, and the seeking of *communitas*. Protestant pilgrimage therefore, in which ordained ministers make the trip and present it in digested form for their congregations back home, appears quite different from the ancient Christian practice dating from the second century C. E. and from the customarily individualized pilgrimages of both Catholics and Muslims. Religious specialists, perhaps fearing potential subversiveness, may have attempted to domesticate the primitive in pilgrimage and transform pilgrimage centers into orderly, solemn, and comfortable encounters. “Honorary” pilgrimage, attempted through the purchase of a book, waters down and certainly tames the essence of the pilgrimage journey itself, for the journey has not physi-

cally been taken, and its actual climax is when the pilgrim is exposed to powerful religious sacra. Modern pilgrimage is mediated by travel agencies and church or denominational tours where contact with the sacred is less individual and more group-oriented, and also highly controlled. In this scenario, human freedom is not necessarily enhanced, and the liminal, rite-of-passage element of pilgrimage appears to be lost. Religious experience trickles from the religious elites down to the public.

The nineteenth-century Holy Land craze was the beginning of modern-day Protestant pilgrimage. It was the epoch when the broader Protestant public began to form opinions about Palestine in line with some of their millennial hopes and expectations, and to look eastward for the beautiful, utopian, promised land pictured in their Bible illustrations. As John Davis writes of Palestine Park at Chautauqua, the Holy City at the St. Louis World's Fair, and the popular parlor pictographs of the Holy Land, "miniature worlds are dominated worlds" (1996: 92). Travel narratives were likewise small worlds unto themselves, crafted by religious leadership for widespread consumption. Over time, the natives of the land were thought to make up a pleasant, historical, and biblical backdrop that served to enhance the modern tourist experience.

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Admiring Our Savvy Ancestors: Abraham's and Jacob's Rhetoric of Negotiation (Gen 23, 33)

G. BROOKE LESTER

Introduction:

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM'S PURCHASE OF THE CAVE AT MACHPELAH (GEN 23) RESEMBLES, in many features, that of Jacob's dealings with Esau upon their reunion (Gen 32-33). This resemblance is found in a shared rhetoric of negotiation, in which what is said frequently does not match precisely what is meant, but by which deceit is not intended, and in which meaning is successfully communicated. In fact, because of the public venue of these negotiations, the characters' intended meanings can only be honestly communicated in just such an oblique manner. I will first survey in brief some possible approaches by which Genesis 23 and 32-33 might be compared, and suggest that the narrative category of "type-scene" is useful, especially in combination with some (greatly simplified) principles of speech-act theory. I will then demonstrate that such a reading sheds light on the speech both of Esau and Jacob as they conclude their reunion scene, specifically showing that Jacob does not actually dissemble when he offers follow Esau to Seir, and that no offense is taken by Esau when Jacob fails in fact to follow him.

This Reading Among Historical Critical and Literary Approaches:

To anticipate somewhat, it will be shown that the two stories show a number of shared narrative features, and that these features have to do with a rhetoric by which the main characters attain what they want in negotiation. Such similarity of pattern might suggest a historical-critical approach, the goal of which would be to determine whether such patterns of negotiation can be situated with confidence in a particular social historical setting. Westermann

names the Neo-Babylonian dialogues as only one example, with the suggestion that the pattern of negotiation in Gen 23 is characteristically Near Eastern (Westermann 1985:372). The Amarna Letters¹ are also a source of information regarding the rhetoric of negotiation in the ancient Near East; for example, such apparently solicitous speech-acts as a “get well card” serve to position oneself advantageously with respect to one’s partner in negotiation. It is true that such historical data provides a valuable context within which to read Gen 23 and 32-33. But, although historical evidence may either challenge or support the plausibility, or the coherence, of my reading, that reading ought not to be thought to depend on the historical existence of tight and precise forms of negotiation matching those discerned in these texts. The same caution works the other way: the existence of historical patterns of negotiation ought not to be proposed simply on the basis of the patterns seen in these tales. These stories do not present themselves as historiography but as story, and good storytelling principles may inform the minor details of narrated events as much as, or more than, a desire to accurately represent observed commercial transactions. Thus, it is clear that no historical conclusions can or ought to be drawn from the literary findings of this paper. In a similar vein, my comparison of these two texts does not mean to suggest that the intent of either of the writers (of Gen 23 or of Gen 32-33) was to evoke the other’s tale in any way, even if he or she knew of that other tale. I should say that what is interesting about these correlations is not that the writer may have planted them consciously, nor that they reveal a concrete genre of story to which the writers felt constrained to adhere—I think it unlikely that either is the case—but rather that they arise of themselves in the context of what Martin Buss refers to as “general human processes,” such that an examination of texts like these provides insight into such shared “human processes” (Buss 1993:77). This affinity with Buss’s work may in turn suggest some kind of form-critical approach.

The “basic human processes” involved in these tales involve the process of negotiating for one’s needs from some standpoint of relative disadvantage, or more especially “outsidership,” and especially doing so in such a public forum that issues of reputation are at stake. Perhaps here these basic human processes are intersected by the attempt to make some kind of home for

¹Letters, dated around the 14th century B.C.E., in part between the pharaoh of Egypt and his Palestinian vassal kings.

oneself where one is not at home, whether in a foreign land (Abraham), or among one's family to whom one has become foreign (Jacob). This is very promising, but differs from Buss's thought, and from form-criticism generally, in that for our purposes the "human processes" imagined are not the context in which the stories may have once been told, but rather the context within which the characters act in the stories themselves. That is, any *Sitz im Leben* of commercial rhetoric relevant to our study is not the setting of the stories' "tellings," but of the stories told. This distinction takes us out of the proper sphere of form-criticism and into that wide field of literary approaches generally called "narrative studies." Because my reading will find a number of similarities between two narrated tales, both of which are "ancestor stories" from Genesis 11-36, Robert Alter's use of "type-scenes" is promising.

In Alter's view, the presence of very similar patterns in a number of narratives may suggest that a certain "type-scene" was in the mind of the writer (Alter 1981:50-51). In our case, the "type-scene" might be that of an ancestor negotiating to meet a particular need, in a public venue, from a position of disadvantage relative to his partner. I will show that such a type-scene could be proposed for these two tales, with the qualifier that these patterns of negotiation may not have constituted, for the writers, a conventional storytelling formula to which they felt compelled to adhere. Rather, these patterns may have been simply taken for granted by the writers of each of these tales. That is, while each writer indeed meant to write about a particular negotiation, the details of the narrated negotiations were likely "transparent" to them in a way they are not to us, and comprise a pattern that to us suggests a type-scene.

Finally, alongside the concept of the type-scene, it will be helpful to bear in mind the ways in which speech is believed to function in the context of speech-act theory. James F. Harris presents clear examples of locution, illocution and perlocution which are based upon President Gerald Ford's pardon of President Nixon (Harris 1980:169-170). Here I offer a paraphrase, using instead Gen. 33:9:

Locution: "I have enough, my brother: let what is yours be yours."

Illocution: Esau thereby *pardoned* Jacob of his debt to him; or, put another way, he *offers* his pardon for Jacob's earlier theft free of charge.

Perlocution:

(a) Esau *forced* a decision on Jacob: whether to offer payment again or not.

- (b) Esau *jeopardized* his prospects of financial gain.
- (c) Esau *impressed* the onlookers with his magnanimity.

It can be seen from this example that, as Harris puts quite clearly, “Locutionary acts are simply sets *of* saying something meaningfully. Illocutionary acts, by comparison, are acts performed *in* saying something, and perlocutionary acts are acts performed *by* saying something (Harris 1980:170).” For another example, to say, “I now pronounce you man and wife” is a locutionary act; its illocution is to bind two persons together in marriage; and among its perlocutionary acts might be to make the bride’s mother weep. It should be clear that almost any theory of rhetoric will accept these functions of speech, whatever they be called, and whatever their proper venue.

I will now show the similarities which exist between Gen 23 and 32-33 in detail, with special attention to the shared narrative context of negotiation and its associated rhetoric.

THE STORIES AND THEIR SIMILARITIES:

At the beginning of Gen 23, the scene is set by the death of Sarah. This death is reported in a formal manner by the Priestly hand, tallying the number of the years of Sarah’s life. Likewise, Abraham’s response is reported as being in accord with the proper contemporary forms of mourning: he went in to *keen* (*sāpad*) for her, and to *weep* (*bākā*) for her.² Only after fulfilling this obligation does Abraham address the separate issue of securing a burial plot. As a landless foreigner who is not a citizen of his land, this issue has both commercial and political dimensions.

Similarly, Jacob in 32:4-6³ takes care to notify Esau of his return from sojourning with Laban (and of the prosperity he now enjoys) with a message “to my lord” (*lā’dōnī*),⁴ and declaring his desire to “find favor” in his

²With the accusative object, *bākāh* typically denotes the formal mourning for which a specified period of time is expected. See Gen. 50:3; Num. 20:29; Deut. 21:13; Jer. 8:23; perhaps Gen. 37:35 and Lev. 10:6. Exceptions include perhaps Isa 16:9.

³Where the BHS varies in its chapter and verse divisions from some English translations, the BHS is followed. All chapter and verse references hereafter will be from Genesis, except where indicated

⁴All translations are my own; exceptions will be so indicated.

eyes. Jacob comes from the North, whereas Esau is said to live in Seir, well south of Succoth where Jacob will eventually settle. The geography suggests that there was for Jacob no practical necessity to inform his brother of his return from Haran, and to request his “favor.” Yet it is only after he willingly fulfils this moral obligation that, learning of Esau’s movement toward him from Seir in force, he begins to negotiate for that favor with an offering of goods.

A surface reading of 23:3-4 in English may suggest that Abraham has asked for a burial site from the Hittites as a free gift: “Give me a holding...” However, in biblical Hebrew, the verb *nātan*, or “give,” is not sharply distinguished from the concept of “selling,” any more than in English. While it can indicate a free giving, it can also indicate the act of trading or selling (e.g., Gen 23:9; 29:27; 30:28; 38:16). Abraham himself will use it so in a later verse, in the phrase “for its full price give it” (*bēkésep mālē’ yittēnnāh*; compare 1 Kgs 21:6; Deut 2:28; others; compare also Akkadian *ana kaspim nadānum*). As he here initiates the negotiation for a burial plot, it may be that he states his intentions with some vagueness out of caution, in order to gauge the response of the Hittites. He may not yet know how they will prefer a landless foreigner to secure such a burial plot. However, there is no reason to think that Abraham fails to mention silver as a ploy to actually receive his plot for free; this will be shown by his later refusal to accept such a gift.

As it happens, such a free offer is the first response of the citizens. This response is in two parts: Abraham is called “my lord” (*’ādōnî*), and a “great prince” (*nešî’ ’ēlōhîm*) in their midst; and the citizens make their personal sepulchers available to him in his need (23:6). That this offer represents their actual wishes is unlikely, if only because the citizens will not continue to press the offer as the negotiation continues. Thus, apparently the purpose of the flattering preface is not to explain the cause of this ostensible generosity toward Abraham, but has some other function. It may be that they call him “my lord,” and a “great prince” who is “in their midst” in order to build him up, so to speak, and so to indicate their willingness that he trade for his property needs with the citizenry. As a foreigner and a landless sojourner, this is not a permission which Abraham can have taken for granted; hence his initial caution. If this rhetorical intent were perceived by the hearer, then the granting of this permission would be an illocutionary function of the citizens’ speech act. Of course, the hyperbole (“lord,” “prince”) has the added rhetorical function of suggesting to any bystanders that Abraham will be able not only to pay, but to pay handsomely (similarly, in the Amarna correspon-

dence, pharaoh praises the greatness of his vassal kings in order to suggest that they should easily keep up their payments of tribute). Also, the ostensible offer of their own sepulchers to Abraham serves to showcase their generosity to any witnesses to the transaction. These last two functions represent the perlocutionary force of the speech act.⁵ There is a risk to the citizens, though: should Abraham be sufficiently dense or opportunistic to accept their offer at face value, they may be honor-bound to make it good. Of course, Abraham would thus purchase his burial plot in exchange for the good will of his neighbors. He would also (publicly) prove wrong their stated estimation of him as a formally knowledgeable merchant of a social status comparable to their own.

Returning to Jacob's case, some parallels may be seen. In 32:13-21, Jacob sends an offering to Esau of more than 540 head of livestock. This is sent in a series of droves, each with a message to Esau that they are an "offering (*minḥâ*) to my lord Esau" (*la 'dōnî lē 'ēśāw*). Esau is delivered that one message multiple times, and yet when he meets Jacob, he will ask about those droves as if he does not yet know their meaning. In fact, his language suggests that the livestock belongs to Jacob: "What of yours is all this camp which I have met?" (33:8).⁶ Like the response of the Hittites to Abraham's tentative opening offer, Esau's question certainly gives Jacob an opening to "put his money away," so to speak. This is especially likely in light of Esau's emotional greeting in 33:6, and its truth will be borne out by Esau's next speech. However, like Abraham, Jacob wisely chooses not to take advantage of this opening: if Esau here has indicated that Jacob may have forgiveness and also keep his offering (that is, if this is Esau's illocutionary intent), it may be because Esau wishes to highlight his own prosperity by a demonstration of indifference (a perlocutionary effect). Further, Esau may indeed mean to indicate to Jacob that Esau's forgiveness is at least theoretically detached from Jacob's willingness to make material amends. Finally, as with the Hittites, it may have the added rhetorical purpose of making clear to all listeners the extent of Esau's magnanimity.

As negotiations continue with Abraham, the basic rhetorical moves already drawn previously are adhered to, and heightened. In the face of the

⁵Meir Sternberg's assessment of the text, especially as regards matters of "face" and of indirect speech, has points of contact with my own (Sternberg 1991).

⁶*mî lēkâ kol hammaḥāneh hazzeh āšer pāgāštî*. The initial clause is similar to the idiom, *mahlî wālāk* (1 Kgs. 17:18; cf the Greek of Mk. 1:24 and 5:7); this fact, and the context, may suggest the translation, "What do you mean by" (NRSV). Since, though, our clause is not identical to that idiom, the precise meaning of the clause is uncertain.

citizens' offer to bury Abraham's dead free of charge in their own sepulchers, Abraham "prostrates" himself before them,⁷ and makes plain his desire to purchase a burial cave of his own—indeed, he has already chosen a particular landholder to approach. Whether coincidentally or by prior agreement, that landowner, Ephron the Hittite, son of Sohar, is already present. Answering Abraham directly, he employs the same formulations of address with which both Abraham and the citizenry had prefaced their speech to this point: "Hear me" (*šēmā ʿēnî*), and, "My lord" (*ʾādōnî*). Also, the narrator takes pains to underscore here (23:10) and later (23:13, 16), the public venue of the negotiation. As had the citizenry before, and despite Abraham's stated desire to pay money, Ephron gives him outright the means to bury his dead. What's more, the site is to belong to Abraham, instead of being a mere plot in another man's burial site. Finally, he makes clear that the entire field is to be Abraham's own.

It may be that Ephron here adds the field to the cave in a way that goes beyond Abraham's own wishes (so von Rad 1961:243); after all, of what use is the field to Ephron without the cave? Or, it may be that when Abraham named the cave by its district, the inclusion of the field was understood (so Westermann 1985:374)—in this case, Ephron is simply describing his "gift" in somewhat expansive terms. In either case, the perlocutionary effect of Ephron's offer is roughly equivalent to that of the citizenry's previous offer: "See, I am wealthy and magnanimous; I offer you a free gift which befits a prince such as yourself; and, being a prince, you no doubt are able to pay, and will recognize the importance of doing so, my spoken words notwithstanding." Because the gift offered is greater than that offered by the citizenry, and because the "sons of my people" are explicitly called as witnesses to the offer (23:11), all rhetorical effects are heightened. But, so then is the risk to Ephron. Although he does cut a better public profile than did the other citizenry, and increases the pressure on Abraham to rise to the fineness of Ephron's praise, he also stands to lose more, financially, if he has overestimated Abraham's grasp of the situation, or has underestimated Abraham's greed. Abraham has only to say, "I accept," and apparently the cave, field, and purchase price are all his to keep. Again, though, it would be only a foolish

7 *hwh* (hishtafel stem), an act native to the act of appeal, which is to say, the act of negotiating from a position of disadvantage; compare to the "prostrations" of Jacob and his family in 33:3, 6-7.

ancestor who would make such a brazen and public ploy; he would, in effect, be selling the good will of his neighbors for silver, as well as showing himself ignorant of proper market rhetorical form. As it turns out, Ephron's estimation of Abraham's rhetorical savvy and good sense is justified.

Abraham prostrates himself again before the assembly, and to Ephron he repeats again the formula, "If only you will hear me" (23:13 *lû šēmā ēnî*). The narrator duly reminds the reader of the audience at the gate, as Abraham reiterates—now for the third time, and most explicitly—his desire to purchase the field, for its value in silver, that he might bury his dead. Ephron answers in kind (23:14-15; perhaps read here and 23:11 *lû* for MT *lô*; see above 23:13), and then tactfully (and as expected) capitulates. Maintaining his carefully cultivated magnanimity, and also Abraham's neatly contrived status as his social brother, Ephron exclaims that the actual price of the field—400 shekels—is not worth mentioning among such company as theirs. Abraham duly weighs out the silver to Ephron.

The apparently high price paid by Abraham for the field requires some comment. The two texts usually introduced as points of reference are Jer 32:7, in which 17 shekels is paid for a field, and 1 Kgs. 16:24, in which 6000 shekels is paid for the area on which Samaria is to be built (Westerman 1985:375; von Rad 1961:243-4). What is the reader meant to understand from such an exaggerated, even legendary, amount? It would surely be odd if the text seeks to portray Abraham as a fool, all his fine manners only serving to make him a clown before the Hittites. Also, if some polemic against non-Israelite inhabitants of the land were intended, it is odd that the story allows that polemic to lie only implicit in the tale. Perhaps the best explanation is that P means for this to be a story about the burial of the most revered of matriarchs: should her grave be on a common scrap of land, or on the best available? This reading is supported by the fact that Abraham is portrayed as being able to produce such a sum "out of pocket": however high the price, it is not out of reach of the esteemed ancestor. So: is it too high a price? Observe what Abraham has in fact purchased. The field, after all, had been his since Ephron first spoke; but, for his money, Abraham acquired the right to own property in the land of his sojourning, and the chance to publicly show himself "at home" in the cosmopolitan rhetoric of upper-class mercantile discourse.

Returning to Jacob: at 33:8a, Esau had put him in a position perhaps to recant his offering of 540+ head of livestock, with which he hoped to purchase Esau's favor. Although Esau had already demonstrated that favor, inde-

pendently of the livestock offering, Jacob reiterates his desire to give the livestock to Esau: “to find favor in the eyes of my lord” (*limṣō ’hēn bē ’ênē ’ădōnī* [33:8b]). If the message(s) he had sent the previous night represent his first effort to make payment for his wrongs, this then is his second attempt.

Esau’s reply is more brief than had been Ephron’s to Abraham’s second attempt at payment, but it is no less magnanimous. First, reminiscent of Ephron’s style, he underscores his own material well-being: “I have much.” He then outright urges Jacob to keep the livestock which he offers: “My brother, let what is yours be yours” (33:9). Esau’s brevity suits the venue of the discourse: this is a family matter, not a trade at the city gate. However, it is not much less public for that, considering the size of each household present. On the writer’s level, too, there is likely also the very public arena of Israel-Edom typology: see Gen. 25:23, 30; 36:1. Therefore, the stakes are similar to those at the corresponding point in the other narrative: by making his generous offer to Jacob explicit rather than only oblique, Esau risks losing what really is his by rights. Further, he should still have to “hand over” the pardon which he has, after all, offered for free. On the other hand, should Jacob make such a play, he would show himself unworthy of Esau’s risk-taking before all the members of both households. Indeed, Jacob being Jacob, the trust which Esau has put in him is remarkable. If the families present aren’t holding their breath at this point, they should be!

Jacob then proves himself worthy of his grandfather’s name (if not in faithfulness, then at least in the beginnings of a mature sense for mercantile rhetoric and responsibility). He names what he had stolen from Esau (“my blessing”: *birkātî*; see Gen. 27:36), attaches that name to his offering (his *minḥā*), and presses it, for now the third time, upon Esau. He even declares, not to be outdone by his brother, “...I have *all*” (*yeš lî kōl*). Esau then does what they each knew he would from the outset: he takes it.

A SUGGESTED READING OF THE BROTHERS’ LEAVETAKING:

The negotiations, and so also the parallels between the stories, seem to end here. Below, I will recapitulate the corresponding elements of these stories in brief. However, better to address right away the way in which the Jacob and Esau story, thus so far told, sheds some needed light on Jacob’s next rhetorical move; that is, that he states his willingness to go on after Esau to Seir, and then goes, instead, to Succoth. In light of Jacob’s well-deserved reputation as the “wily trickster,” the casual reader may be excused for jumping to

the conclusion that this is yet another instance of easy disassembly on Jacob's part. Such a reading is sometimes offered, but is rarely defended with any vigor. Perhaps the strongest argument to be made for it is that by having referred to his gift to Esau as his "blessing" (*birkātî*), Jacob may be understood to have put himself and his goods under the rule of Esau, the once-and-again *pater familias*: hence the need to escape such rule by means of a falsehood. There are, however, a number of difficulties with such a reading, at least in the text as we have received it. If this is a bit of Jacob-style trickery, it must be said that it is not particularly skillful. If, though, the narrator would have us see Jacob as a casual and clumsy dissembler, it would need to be explained how that fits with his other, more straightforward behavior in this narrative. Also, there are items missing which would need to be accounted for if this were a "wily trickster" type-scene after the fashion of, for instance, 25:29-34 or 27:1-45. Particularly, there is no moment of recognition on Esau's part, wherein he laments his loss or vows revenge (27:38, 41); nor does the narrator summarize the loss (25:34b). There is another difficulty with the trickster reading, which only becomes clear in the larger context of the story. In Gen. 32, Jacob has prevailed in a test put to him by God, and that passage was marked by a change in name. Such a change alerts the reader to look for a change in the status or being of the named. It is certain that the chapter following our story (Gen. 34) will show a marked change in Jacob/Israel's behavior: he will forgo rash action almost reflexively (34:5b), and reprimand his sons for such action with an appeal to caution: a caution proper to a sober and temperate ancestor who puts the peace of his house above the vainglory of impulsive retaliation. While I would not insist that the encounter at Peniel must needs amount to a wholesale moral regeneration for Jacob, it must be said that an outright lie makes for an odd transition from the Israel who makes good his honor debt to his brother to the Israel who pragmatically deplores false dealing even with the one who raped his own daughter! I think, therefore, that there is a better reading.

After Esau has accepted Jacob's offering (33:11), the serious business of the encounter is past. Esau immediately suggests that they go on together on

⁸ *lēnegdekā*, from the root *ngd*: "be conspicuous, be in plain sight." While the usual meaning of this adverb is "in front of," Jacob's counterproposal that Esau go on "in front of his servant" (*lipnê 'abdô*) suggests that "alongside of" is a better reading here of *neged*. So, NRSV.

“their” way, and that he go “alongside” Jacob.⁸ It may be observed that Jacob has not to this point indicated a desire to settle in, or even to visit, Seir. He had indeed sent messengers to Esau to inform him of his ability and desire to make amends (though he might have slipped unnoticed into Succoth without having bothered). But, he had said nothing about actually entering Esau’s territory, which again he need not have crossed to reach Succoth from the northeast. However, at the moment of Esau’s invitation, an extremely delicate diplomatic balance had been constructed. Esau’s offer is exactly of a piece with the hyperbole which has preceded it: as one who “has much,” and who has just made peace with a brother (at that brother’s material expense, yet), he has no real alternative but to offer hospitality. To fail to do so would represent a loss of face for himself and possibly an insult to Jacob. This is not to say that Esau’s offer is necessarily insincere. However, my point is that Esau’s position at this point makes the invitation nearly unavoidable, sincere or not. Jacob, apparently inclined to “take a pass,” offers Esau an excuse: the frailty of Jacob’s charges compels him to go slowly, and he will “lead himself gently” at their pace, “until whenever I might come to my lord at Seir” (33:14).⁹ The rather transparent lameness (no reference to Jacob’s recent athletics intended) of this excuse supports my contention that no actual deceit is intended; rather, it is meant only as a polite refusal, in a situation where an explicit and public rejection of hospitality might only upset the delicate political balance struck to this point. Esau then offers to leave Jacob “some people” (33:15). On the one hand, this could be taken as a “feeler,” to determine whether Esau should in fact prepare his house to receive Jacob and all his charges. On the other, it could be taken as a friendly offer to part with a few servants to help Jacob settle wherever he is to go, or even to ameliorate the material losses to Jacob represented by the accepted “offering.” It must certainly be said that Esau has little motive to compel Jacob to join him in Seir, unless one takes the view that Esau is again the first-born in fact and in effect, and that he loathes to let slip away those remaining goods of Jacob’s which ought to augment further his own holdings. But again, Esau makes no

⁹ It appears to me that the construction *‘ad ’āšer* elsewhere indicates an indefinite, usually lengthy, amount of time: frequently, it is associated with “tarrying,” or action which occurs “little by little.” My translation, “until whenever,” seeks to reflect the drawn out, “dawdling” quality I find here, which quality suits nicely the meandering imagery which Jacob evokes in his excuse. Compare, for instance, Gen. 27:44; 29:8; Exod. 23:30; 24:14; others.

attempt to secure compliance with any such wish, now or later, though he is obviously able to do so. All the evidence in the text suggests that his offer is benign. In any case, Jacob demurs, suggesting that to accept Esau's offer might diminish the favor which he has found in the eyes of his lord.¹⁰ Thus, with their business complete, and a standing invitation between them, the brothers part: Esau goes on his way to Seir, and Jacob on his to Succoth.

SUMMARY OF THE CORRELATIONS:

The story of Abraham's purchase has a clear beginning, after the promise of progeny through Isaac (22:15-19), which is capped by news of Rebecca's birth (22:20-24). It begins with Sarah's death, and Abraham's formally correct observance of the expected rituals of mourning. The story of Jacob's reunion with Esau has a clear beginning, after his tale with Laban ends with arrangements for peace, and Laban returns home (31:43-55). It begins with Jacob gratuitously, carefully and correctly notifying Esau of his return, and of his ability and willingness to find favor in Esau's sight (32:4-6).

Abraham sets out to purchase a burial plot with silver; Jacob sets out to purchase forgiveness with livestock. Abraham and Jacob each offer payment three times. Each is twice offered the object of their desire free of charge, and each recognizes the rhetorical intent of these offers. Each is able to respect the need of their bargaining partner to build and keep "face," and each is aware of his own need to pay in full for what is, on the face of things, freely offered.

Each of these exchanges plays to an audience, which fact calls for and shapes the rhetoric employed. The message to the bystanders is that the principals are wise negotiators, who are at home with the manners of the "princes" and the wealthy of the world, and who are adept and graceful communicators. I suggest that this also may be the effect of this rhetoric upon the reading audience, provided that the reader is inclined to appreciate the fine points of the exchange, and highly to esteem skillfulness of such kind. I say also that here we find a link between these narratives and others in the ancestral stories. Those stories may not always present the ancestors as particularly virtuous, but they generally acknowledge the prowess with which Abraham and Jacob "get on" in their world. Consider some of these tales, for

¹⁰NRSV's paraphrase, "Why should my lord be so kind to me?" while not inaccurate, is unfortunate in that this reference to the ongoing theme of the "favor" Jacob seeks from Esau is lost.

instance: Abraham and Abimelek; the rescue of Lot from the forces of Chederlaomer; Abraham's hospitality to the three visitors; Jacob's deceptions of Esau; Jacob's prosperity with Laban and his subsequent diplomacy. I would, then, distinguish between the type-scene of the "wily trickster ancestor," and that of, perhaps, the "ancestor as sophisticated and high-class negotiator." These would each be a partially-overlapping subset of that brand of tale which depict the ancestors as generally capable, shrewd, wise, strong, subtle, classy: the very models, if you will, of modern major forbears.

I have discerned a common thread of rhetorical function in the speech of the principle characters of Gen. 23 and 33. I have shown that the proper context of study for this rhetoric of negotiation is with a view to type-scenes and in light of some simple categories culled from speech-act theory. The correlations demonstrated between the two tales suggest a type-scene of the ancestor as sophisticated negotiator and master of indirect speech, skills befitting one who deals regularly and easily with the princes of the world. Read in this way, it has been seen that Esau's suggestion that Jacob join him in Seir is benign rather than an assertion of power, and that Jacob's suggestion that he will travel "at his pace," "until whenever" he join Esau, is rather a polite and transparent indication of his own wishes than an attempt to actually fool his brother.

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Christian Realism and Latin American Liberation Theology: Expanding the Dialogue

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IN THIS ESSAY, I AM PROPOSING A CONVERSATION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN REALISM—particularly in the thought of its most famous representative, Reinhold Niebuhr—and Latin American liberation theology with the intent of stressing the differences and commonalties that exist between these two schools. Both Christian realism and liberation theology emerged as public theologies in the twentieth century. While Niebuhr's Christian Realism has been widely acknowledged as one of the most influential Christian theories in the fields of social ethics and political philosophy in North America in the twentieth century, liberation theology has had an amazing impact not only upon Latin America, but also among all oppressed and disinherited peoples spread throughout the globe. Unfortunately, Niebuhr did not live long enough to engage in a dialogue with liberation theology, since the latter only began to be noticed by the academia in the late 1960s. In the beginning, liberation theology was perceived simply as local phenomena, and many mainstream theologians thought it would make no great impact upon mainline theologies which dominated the religious scenario in Europe and in the United States at that point in history. Furthermore, in Niebuhr's lifetime there was not much interchange between theologies from the Southern Hemisphere and those from the Northern.

The first available interaction between Christian realism and Latin American liberation theology dates from 1973. Niebuhr had already died, but one of his followers, Thomas G. Sanders, invoked his mentor's authority to accuse Latin American liberation theology of being nothing more than another type of "soft utopianism" (Sanders 1973:167). The reply, with equal vigor, came from Brazilian theologian and Princeton Theological Seminary's graduate Rubem Alves, who responded to Sanders' accusation by saying that

Christian realism was but an “ideology of the establishment” (Alves 1973:173). Ever since, these two streams of Christian public theologies have been mostly understood on an either/or basis, i.e., as two contrasting approaches to Christian social ethics. The debate started in two 1973 issues of *Christianity and Crisis* and has had continuity throughout the last three decades, with a climax during the eighties. Despite a few attempts of conciliation, the antagonism between the two approaches has prevailed. It is worth noting that after the initial debate in *Christianity and Crisis* almost no Latin American voice has been heard in this debate. The few Latin Americans who have addressed Christian realism, such as Miguez Bonino (1983:88), only reinforce the indignation Rubem Alves showed towards Sander’s unfair charges against liberationist thought in 1973, and suggested a reading of Niebuhr from the perspective of the more progressive views of his early days.

One of the best attempts to analyze the relationship between Christian realism and liberation theology has been made by Dennis P. McCann. McCann (1981) does not see Christian realism and liberation theology as being mutually exclusive. As he puts these two schools of thought in conversation with each other, he implies he wants to give a fair hearing to both of them. However his language betrays his declared intention. From the outset of his book one can see the existence of some prejudice towards liberation theology. He refers to it as the “false promise of liberation theology,” and makes comments such as, “we should take liberation theology as a sincere but confused protest” (McCann 1981:2-3). By using this kind of language McCann could not avoid setting Christian realism and liberation theology on opposite fields, and ended up making claims of superiority of the latter over the former.

I intend to enter this conversation from a Latin American perspective, being, however, more sympathetic to Niebuhr than Alves was, but also doing more justice to liberation theology than McCann, Sanders, and other North American analysts have done. Indeed, I want to argue that liberation theology can, in a certain sense, be perceived as a kind of Christian realism, even though it presents clear differences when compared to Niebuhr’s Christian realism. I will hold that the major differences between these two types of Christian realism reside mainly in the different socio-historical situations to which they speak, their views toward power, and their expectations about the possibilities of human beings in history—i.e., their anthropological and eschatological perspectives. However, both schools share a concern with social justice and the structural

nature of sin, a strong pragmatism, and a serious reading of reality as their starting point. Those characteristics make these two theological schools much closer to each other than many would admit. Furthermore, in Niebuhr's own writings there is sufficient evidence for one to believe that had he lived long enough to see the development of Latin American liberation theology, he himself would have probably been more sympathetic to it than some of his followers have been.

In spite of the obvious differences between these two schools—differences which I by no means deny or overlook—I want to affirm that both Christian realism and Latin American liberation theology can be complementary to each other. None of the two can subsist in today's world without listening to what the other has to say. In order to achieve my purpose in this essay I will offer an overview of both Niebuhr's Christian realism and Latin American liberation theology, pointing out some of their common key themes, which can exemplify the differences and similarities between the two schools. It is my belief that in cooperating, and keeping an open-minded and unbiased conversation with each other, both Christian realism and Latin American liberation theology can become much more efficient in speaking to the contemporary world as two different—and yet complementary—Christian public theologies.

AN OVERVIEW OF NIEBUHR'S CHRISTIAN REALISM WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE THEMES OF SIN, POWER, AND JUSTICE/LOVE

It is quite difficult to systematize or fairly summarize the thought of someone whose mind was so dynamic and unsystematic as was Reinhold Niebuhr's. However, it is possible to identify the central points or ideas around which Niebuhr's thinking orbited. Niebuhr was an amazingly prolific writer as well as someone whose thinking changed significantly from his youth as a pastor in Detroit to his maturity as a social ethicist. I will focus on some themes that appeared in Niebuhr's work throughout his life, and will privilege those topics in Niebuhr that might prove more useful for the conversation between Christian realism and liberation theology, which I propose here.

The realism of Reinhold Niebuhr was a response to both the optimism of liberalism about the achievements of reason, and the cynicism of those who were completely disenchanted with the progress of humanity. Niebuhr thought that the Christian Gospel was the only alternative to the blind optimism of modernity, which also would avoid the cynicism of other modern discontents (Niebuhr 1953:106). Although some people seem to see Niebuhr's realism only as against the background of the liberal optimism about humanity, making him look like a pessimist, Niebuhr cannot be simply depicted in that way. Robert McAfee Brown points out that there is in Niebuhr's thought an ultimate optimism about human beings that is frequently overlooked by his critics (1986:xi). One can see that in Niebuhr's own words:

There are no limits to be set in history for the achievement of more universal brotherhood, for the development of more perfect and more inclusive mutual relations. All the characteristic hopes and aspirations of Renaissance and Enlightenment, of both secular and Christian liberalism are right at least in this, that they understand that side of the Christian doctrine which regards the agape of the Kingdom of God as a resource for infinite development towards a more perfect brotherhood in history... The freedom of man makes it impossible to set any limits of race, sex, or social condition upon the brotherhood which may be achieved in history. (Niebuhr 1943:85)

This is, of course, only one side of Niebuhr's view of human nature and history. The point, however, is that any fair look at Niebuhr's thought must take into account the two extremes which he was trying to avoid, and not just one. Niebuhr possessed a unique ability to denounce the shortcomings of any human system and its pretensions. He saw human nature in its real situation, as paradoxical and full of internal conflicts. He pointed out the ambiguities of human nature in response to the exaggerated optimism of liberalism, trying at the same time to avoid the appeal of nihilism.

In the very first sentences of one of his major books, Niebuhr set forth the problem that was pivotal for his entire thought:

Man has always been his own most vexing problem. How shall he think of himself?... If man insists that he is a child of nature and that he ought not to pretend to be more than the animal, which he obviously is, he tacitly admits that he is, at any rate, a curious kind of animal who has both the inclination and the capacity to make such pretensions. If on the other hand he

insists upon his unique and distinctive place in nature and points to his rational faculties as proof of his special eminence, there is usually an anxious note in his avowals of uniqueness which betrays his unconscious sense of kinship with the brutes. (Niebuhr 1996:1) [*Emphasis mine*]

Niebuhr locates human beings in the juncture of nature and spirit, participating in both (Brown 1989:160). It is with this view of human nature in mind that Niebuhr engages any topic which he discusses. Niebuhr's view of human beings and the world is strongly influenced by a tradition that traces its way back to Paul, Augustine, and the Reformers. Therefore, Christian concepts such as sin and grace are crucial for his understanding of human nature, even though sometimes he translates that religious language into a secular one in order to speak to a secular society in a more relevant way. For the purpose of the conversation I am proposing here, I will focus on three key themes in Niebuhr—namely, sin, power, and the binary concept of love/justice—which appear throughout his work. These themes are also present in the writings of some Latin American liberation theologians. Thus, by understanding these key concepts in Niebuhr, it will be easier to put him in conversation with liberationist thought, as well as to clearly identify the differences and commonalties between them.

NIEBUHR'S UNDERSTANDING OF SIN

Sin is a central concept in Niebuhr. It is, in fact, the determination to take seriously the reality of sin in human nature that makes Niebuhr's approach to social ethics particularly significant. For Niebuhr, sin is at the very core of human nature. It has to do with the unwillingness of human beings to recognize their finiteness. His main criticism of modernity is that it fails to understand the real measure of human nature. That misunderstanding, consequently, leads to the reduction of the problem of evil to specific historical causes, failing to inquire "how such particular causes could have arisen" (Niebuhr 1996:99). Thus, the modern notion of individuality makes human beings forget the limits of creatureliness, which they cannot transcend.

For Niebuhr, Christianity has the highest view of human nature because it sets limits to the human spirit by bounding it by the will of God. He believes that only a religion of revelation such as Christianity is able to do justice to both the freedom and the finiteness of human beings and to understand the character of evil in them. Christian faith, differently from any modern philosophy, sets the limits of human transcendence because in it

humans are conceived as creatures; their freedom is subordinate to the freedom of God, the Creator. It is only in the encounter with this transcendent God as a wholly other that humans can understand the complexities of their behavior. As Niebuhr himself puts it, "Man does not know himself truly except as he knows himself confronted by God. Only in that confrontation does he become aware of his full stature and freedom and of the evil in him" (1996:131). God is the wholly other who confronts us from beyond ourselves. This experience of confrontation/judgment generates a sense of moral obligation laid upon one from beyond oneself as well as a feeling of moral unworthiness.

Niebuhr sees the origin of the evil dwelling human nature in three things: (1) the unwillingness of human beings to acknowledge the weakness, finiteness and dependence of their position; (2) their inclination to grasp after power and security, which transcend the possibilities of human existence; (3) and their effort to pretend to have a virtue and knowledge which are beyond the limits of mere creatures. Sin, then, is the attempt of human beings to make themselves God; their refusal to acknowledge the dependent character of their life.

Niebuhr sees sin as being preceded by anxiety. We live in a world that passes to us a sense of insecurity and meaninglessness. Anxiety is turned into sin as we tend to make ourselves doubly secure in an effort to prove our significance. However, anxiety itself is not sin; it is rather both the temptation to sin and the source of our creativity. Human beings are anxious because of the fear of falling "into the abyss of meaninglessness" (Niebuhr 1996:185).

When anxiety conceives, it brings forth two forms of sin—namely pride and sensuality. Pride is connected with one's attempt to raise one's existence to unconditioned significance, whereas sensuality has to do with one's attempt to escape one's unlimited possibilities of freedom and from the perils and responsibilities of self-determination. For Niebuhr, however, the sin of pride is more basic than that of sensuality. Thus his analysis of the human nature tends to focus on the sin of pride.

Niebuhr distinguishes between three types of pride: pride of power, pride of knowledge, and pride of virtue. These three, however, are never completely distinct in actual life. The first form of pride is the human desire for power and glory. It manifests itself as the will-to-power, which originates in a primal fear of death, i.e., as will-to-live. The will-to-power is present in human life as "an expression of insecurity even when it has achieved ends, which,

from the perspective of an ordinary mortal, would seem to guarantee complete security” (Niebuhr 1996:194).

According to Niebuhr, intellectual pride is the pride of reason, which forgets that it is involved in a temporal process and imagines itself in complete transcendence over history. He rejects the certainty of rationalists by affirming that all human knowledge is tainted with an ideological taint. It pretends to be more than it is, that is finite knowledge, gained from a peculiar perspective; but it pretends to be final and ultimate knowledge. Here Niebuhr is profoundly indebted to Marxism, and he does acknowledge its contribution to the discovery of the ideological taint in all knowledge and culture. However he criticizes the Marxists for not being able to apply that principle to their own knowledge. The pride of virtue can be manifested in two ways. As moral pride it means “the pretension of finite man that his highly conditioned virtue is the final righteousness and that his very relative moral standards are absolute” (Niebuhr 1996:199). Moral pride transforms virtue into the very vehicle of sin. By its spirit of self-righteousness and self-justification, it is responsible for our most serious cruelties, injustices and defamation against other fellow humans. The pride of virtue can also appear as spiritual pride, which culminates in self-deification. This occurs when our partial standards and relative attainments are explicitly related to the unconditioned good, and claim divine sanction. For Niebuhr, this is the worst form of self-assertion, because under the guise of spiritual contrition, God is claimed as the exclusive ally of our contingent self.

There is no final guarantee against any of these forms of pride, because the self deceives itself in an attempt to avoid any check by the censure of conscience. Humans tend to have too good a view of themselves in order to justify or assert their sinful acts. Despite these affirmations Niebuhr still believes in the existence of sparks of goodness in human nature, reminiscent from the original form in which it was created. In the overall he is still more optimistic about the things human beings can achieve than many Reformed theologians would be.

NIEBUHR’S CONCEPT OF POWER AND HIS MOVE FROM RELIGION AND ETHICS TO POLITICS

One of Niebuhr’s best contributions to the understanding of society was his distinction between individual egotism and group pride (See Niebuhr 1941). Niebuhr suggests that social groups are morally inferior in comparison to individuals. He affirms that whereas individuals may be morally able

to consider the interests of others in spite of their own in the resolution of some situations, this is more unlikely to happen in the level of human societies and social groups. This inferior morality of social groups in comparison to individuals reveals a collective egoism. Egoism achieves a more vivid expression and a more cumulative effect when it is united in a common impulse than when it expresses itself separately and discreetly.

In his book *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1941) Niebuhr tries to uncover the historical roots of social injustice. He intends to challenge the positions held by both religious and secular moralists, which do not recognize that there are some elements in the collective behavior of humanity that belong to the order of nature and, therefore, can never be brought completely under the dominion of reason or conscience. Thus, he criticizes modern educators and sociologists that ascribe the roots of all social problems to ignorance.

Niebuhr does not trust in the capacity of reason to solve our social difficulties. Reason itself, he affirms, is always the servant of interest in a social situation. Therefore, social injustice cannot be resolved by moral and rational persuasion alone. Social conflict is inevitable, and in that conflict "power must be challenged by power" (1941:xv). According to him, the roots of social conflict do not reside in ignorance, but rather in self-interest as well as in the disproportion of power in society. That conflict will never end while the disproportion of power remains. It can be mitigated by social intelligence and good will, but can never be abolished. Any social theory that does not take seriously the effects and continuity of this disproportion of power within society is naïve and utopian. So, Niebuhr proposes that while the relation between individuals must be predominantly ethical, the relations between groups must rather be predominantly political. By this he means that group relations are to be "determined by the proportion of power which each group possesses at least as much as by any rational and moral appraisal of the comparative needs and claims of each group" (1941:xxiii).

Despite believing in the existence of sparks of goodness and altruism in human nature, Niebuhr is convinced that on the social and political level sentiments of benevolence and goodwill will never be so pure as to create a truly just society. He believes that all social cooperation on a larger scale than the most intimate social group requires a measure of coercion. This coercive factor in social life and politics might be covert sometimes, becoming

¹ "The will-to-live becomes the will-to-power" (Niebuhr 1941:18).

apparent only in times of crisis, but it is never absent. On the other hand, he is aware that any kind of significant social power develops social inequality. And as it is impossible to justify the degree of inequality that is created in more complex societies due to the increased concentration of power in those societies, they tend to invent romantic and moral interpretations of the real facts, preferring to obscure rather than reveal the true character of their collective behavior. That social hypocrisy tries to hide the fact that the disproportion of power in a complex society perpetuates social injustice.

Every social group tends to develop imperial ambitions. The instinct of survival gives birth to a desire to expand itself.¹ For Niebuhr, that is the main cause of the modern wars. He believes that society is in a permanent state of war. Internally, it sacrifices justice to have peace; externally, the same forces that advocate an internal and unjust peace, become the makers of war to other nations. This conflict tends to remain to the end of history. Therefore, the dream of perpetual peace and brotherhood for human society is one which can only be approximated, but which will never be fully realized. In virtue of that, Niebuhr advocates a more modest goal for society: instead of trying to become an ideal society, we should try to work for a society in which there will be enough justice, and in which coercion will be sufficiently non-violent to prevent humans' common enterprise from issuing into a complete disaster.

Power, thus, is a crucial concept in Niebuhr's social ethics. It is present in all group relations; it cannot be overlooked; and its accumulation is potentially a destructive force, which prevents humanity from fulfilling its utopian dreams of living together in a world of peace and justice. For him, the maximum one can expect is that society reaches a balance of power, where one power can check another in order to avoid the abuse of any unchecked power.

NIEBUHR ON LOVE AND JUSTICE

The last Niebuhrian theme I want to explore here is the relationship between justice and love. Niebuhr's view of justice cannot be understood apart from his understanding of love. He sees love as the primary norm and "the ultimate motive in the process of making an ethical judgment in the world" (Noh 1983:1). Justice, on the other hand, is the intermediate or penultimate norm for ethical decision-making. Although Niebuhr thinks that Christians

should not abandon the ideal of the law of love, he believes that in the real world only the law of justice can regulate the predominance of self-interest in the collective relations of humankind.

Niebuhr thinks that American Christianity has been irrelevant to the problems of social justice because it persists in presenting the law of love as a simple solution for every communal problem (1992:25). For him, love cannot be used as a mediator in the relations between different social groups. As he states, nations, classes and races do not love one another. The maximum one can expect from them is a high sense of obligation to one another. That sense of obligation will be expressed in the form of justice; that is the desire to give each other their due. Because of this erroneous emphasis on love, instead of an emphasis on justice, Christians tend to substitute philanthropy for justice in their societal life.

This emphasis on love, according to Niebuhr, was also the great mistake of the social gospel movement, as it attempted to develop an adequate social ethic for the reconstruction of society out of the social teachings of Jesus. For him, the ethic of Jesus was rather a personal ethics. Jesus did not have much concern with social and political issues. His ethical ideal, centered on the individual life, "was one of complete disinterestedness, religiously motivated" (Niebuhr 1992:31). Niebuhr believes that this emphasis on pure disinterest, with actions that result purely from religious motives, puts the ethics of Jesus above the area of social ethics. According to him, Jesus' ethical ideal is impossible to attain because of the powerful drive of self-interest in life, but it cannot be completely renounced. It has a place as an ideal which convicts every moral achievement of imperfection, being, however, beyond the realm of actual human history. Niebuhr calls this ethic of perfect love "an impossible possibility" (Niebuhr 1935:109). Here lies the element of hope in Niebuhr's thought. Love, as an impossible ethical ideal, functions as a motivation for humans, towards achieving a level of justice which approximates this ideal. Love is not set aside for the sake of justice. On the contrary, it has to be present in the practice of justice, because of the imperfection and limitation of the justice human beings can attain in society. As Niebuhr himself puts it, "justice that is only justice is less than justice. Only imaginative justice, that is, love that begins by espousing the rights of the other rather than self, can achieve a modicum of fairness" (1992:32).

The relation between love and justice is complex, paradoxical and dialectical. He affirms that love is both the fulfillment and the negation of all

achievements of justice and history. On one hand it indicates that the possibilities of the achievements of justice in history may rise in indeterminate degrees to find their fulfillment in a more perfect love and brotherhood. On the other hand, it testifies that each level of fulfillment also contains elements which stand in contradiction to perfect love. So, the best possible harmony achievable within the conditions created by human egoism is that which is achieved through justice, which is only an approximation of that more perfect ideal of love and brotherhood. There are two universal principles of justice by which the formulation of specific rules and systems of justice is oriented. These are the principles of equality and liberty. He describes the principle of equality as a pinnacle of the ideal of justice, which points towards love as the final norm of justice. However, in spite of the general validity and universality of these principles, they cannot be applied as absolute principles in history, because even those principles in a given social conflict are ideologically tainted. The function of these principles of justice is to serve as a reference to check the injustices in the exercise of political power.

For Niebuhr, social justice requires the organization and balance of power among social groups. This equilibrium of power is the highest level of justice attainable in history. It is the most successful way to avoid the domination of one life by another. Achieving this equilibrium of power, nevertheless, is not the same as living in a utopian brotherhood. It is simply the possible way to limit the imperial impulse of one class or group within the community. Having offered this overview of Niebuhr's understanding of sin, power, and the relation between justice and love, we can move to liberation's theology approach to these themes.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND ITS UNDERSTANDING OF SIN, POWER, LOVE AND JUSTICE

Latin American liberation theology can be seen as a byproduct of the increasing disillusionment that filled the hearts of most Latin Americans in the early 1960s. In the 1950s, the situation in Latin America was marked by a great optimism with regard to the possibilities of the continent to achieve self-sustained economic development. That was known as the decade of developmentalism (Gutierrez 1990:180). Due to the frustration of those

aspirations, the term development fell into disgrace among Latin Americans in the next decade. As Gustavo Gutierrez affirms, the word development was turned into a pejorative term in Latin America due both to the deficiencies of the development policies proposed to the poor countries to lead them out of their underdevelopment and also to the lack of concrete achievements of the interested governments (1986:26). Latin Americans realized that developmentalism was nothing more than a synonym of timid measures of societal reform and modernization, which were really ineffective in the long run, and insufficient to achieving real transformation. At the same time they began to realize that part of their underdevelopment was a byproduct of their relations with the richer countries. Since the attempts to bring about changes in the existing order had failed to achieve any significant transformation, people in those poor countries realized that it was more appropriate to speak about a process of liberation, which would attack the root causes of the problems they were facing.

The term liberation was thought to be more meaningful for the Latin American context, and expressed “the inescapable moment of radical change which is foreign to the ordinary use of the term development.”² Liberation implies a radical break from the status quo, which entails “a profound transformation of the private propriety system, access to power of the exploited classes, and a social revolution that would break this dependence [upon the rich countries, and] would allow for change to a new society, a socialist society” (Gutierrez 1986:26, 27). In liberationist thought human beings are viewed not as subject to any form of destiny, but as masters of their own destiny. The capacity of human beings to transform society is emphasized, and the conquest of true freedom is seen as both the drive force and ultimate goal of history.

This kind of thought is not peculiar to liberation theologians in Latin America. Prior to the emergence of liberation theology, other Latin American intellectuals paved the way that liberation theologians would walk through. The distinctive element brought about by liberation theology was not the use of Marxism as an analytical instrument to read the reality of Latin America society. It was, instead, the use of both the Bible and Christian tradition to offer a theological language to interpret that reality. This reading of

² Gutierrez does not completely reject the use of the term *development*. However, he believes that only in the context of the process of *liberation* “can a policy of development be effectively implemented, have any real meaning, and avoid misleading formulations” (1986:27).

the Bible from the perspective of the oppressed led Latin American liberation theology to its preferential option for the poor. Gutierrez speaks of three levels in the unfolding of the process of liberation :

In the first place, liberation expresses the aspiration of oppressed peoples and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social, and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes...At a deeper level, liberation can be applied to an understanding of history. Man is seen as assuming conscious responsibility for his own destiny...The gradual conquest of true freedom leads to the creation of a new man and a qualitatively different society...Finally...the word liberation allows for another approach leading to the biblical sources which inspire the presence and action of man in history. In the Bible, Christ is presented as the one who brings us liberation. Christ the Savior liberates man from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression. Christ makes man truly free, that is to say, he enables man to live in communion with him; and this is the basis for all human brotherhood (1986:36,37).

Latin American liberation theology takes seriously all these three levels of the process of liberation, and puts them into a dialectical interaction, which makes it able to listen to the reality of the social struggles of the unprivileged, to history itself, and to the insights that come from the Bible. Since liberation theology tries to take into consideration all the factors that compound the reality of the poor and oppressed, one can say that it is a realistic theology. Leonardo and Clodovis Boff describe three scandalous scenes to portray the experience that they have had with people dying of hunger in northeastern Brazil, one of the most famine-stricken parts of the world. They describe those three terrible hunger scenarios in order to affirm that the starting point of liberation theology is exactly "the perception of scandals such as those described...which exist not only in Latin America, but throughout the Third World"(1987:2).³ They move on to show that liberation theology is mainly concerned with those who are starving in the world, with those who are living in absolute poverty, with those who do not even have access to the most ba-

³ This is the reason why the use of the social sciences as instruments of social analysis becomes something so vital for Latin American liberation theology.

sic medical care or to regular water supply, with those who are illiterate, etcetera. That is the reality from which Latin American liberation theologians reflect. Their starting point, then, is the reality of “com-passion”, of “suffering with” the oppressed. For these theologians, without a minimum participation in this suffering that affects the great majority of the human race, liberation theology can neither exist nor be understood. As Sobrino says, there is a vital environment, a reality that all Latin American liberation theologians take into consideration when developing all the important themes of their theology (2000:154). Jurgen Moltmann has affirmed that his contact with Latin American liberation theology has shown him that “any good Christian theology knows in which context, in which kairos, in which community it must be situated” (2000:227). In that sense liberation theology is rather realistic than utopian and corroborates Niebuhr’s understanding of the contextual and limited character of all knowledge.

Latin American liberation theology conveys not only a perception of a specific reality of oppression and poverty, but also a strong and vivid commitment with that reality. Therefore, methodologically, it is only after one is able to “do” liberation that one can do theology (Boff & Boff 1987:22).⁴ This is why most liberation theologians define theology as “critical reflection on the praxis of liberation” (Oliveros 1993:12). With this background information in mind, I want to engage the discussion of how liberation theologians have approached the topics of sin, power and the relation between love and justice.

LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY’S VIEW OF SIN

In *A Theology of Liberation* Gustavo Gutierrez defines sin as “the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression” (1986:37). By affirming that sin is the ultimate cause of poverty, injustice and oppression, Latin American liberation theology shows that it is not only concerned with the structural reasons that produce these situations, but also with a personal and collective will that is behind all unjust structures, something defined as “a willingness to reject God and neighbor” (Gutierrez

⁴ In other words, for liberation theology, *orthopraxis* is more important than *orthodoxy*. Theology is a second moment in the process of liberation. As Clodovis Boff affirms, “faith is first and foremost, although not exclusively, *orthopraxis*” (Boff 1987:37).

1986:35). Here, once more, liberation theology goes beyond Marxism. It cannot be charged with reducing religion to class ideology. Sin is a historical reality for liberation theology. However, like Niebuhr himself, and the Social Gospel movement prior to him, Latin American liberation theology does not consider sin as a merely individual, private, and interior matter. On the contrary, it depicts sin mainly in its collective dimension. Sin is “a social, historical fact, the absence of brotherhood and love in relationships among men, the breach of friendship with God and with other men, and, therefore, an interior, personal fracture” (Gutierrez 1986:175). Sin is born in the interior of human beings, but it becomes visible and evident in oppressive structures, in exploitation of human beings by their neighbors, in the domination and slavery of peoples, races, and social classes. It is at the root of all injustice and exploitation, and is the fundamental alienation of humanity.

There are similarities and dissimilarities between liberation theology’s approach to sin, and Niebuhr’s. Among those similarities one can include the following: (1) there is no denial of the reality of sin. Sin is real and affects all humanity; (2) sin oppresses human beings both as individuals and as collectivity, but its reality and effects are seen more clearly in its social dimension; (3) humans tend to make use of self-deceptions to disguise their sin; and (4) sin is understood as “the masking of the truth by unjust egoism” (Faus 1993: 534). All these points coincide to some extent with Niebuhr’s conception of sin.

However, those similarities should not allow us to overlook the differences between them. The main differences between Niebuhr’s Christian realism and Latin American liberation theology have to do with the social contexts to which each of them speaks. Since Latin American liberation theology’s starting point is the reality of the poor and oppressed, there are some peculiarities—proper to that context—in its understanding of sin that cannot be expected to be found in the context of Niebuhr’s social ethics. One of those peculiarities is that, although liberation theologians do not deny the sinfulness of all human beings, they tend to see the poor and oppressed not as sinners, but as victims of structural sin. These people need not to be blamed for their sin; they rather need to be liberated from the sinful structures that victimize them. As Jose Comblin says,

Some human beings are more deserving of compassion than blame. Although sin is committed by human beings, it is committed collectively and anony-

mously; it comes from established structures rather than the personal malice of individuals. This does not exclude the possibility of individual malice, but what is due to it bears no comparison with the enormous mass of evils proceeding from structures of domination and exploitation, in which human beings are more often manipulated than manipulators. Sin is the statement of an immense human passivity, a lack of freedom (Comblin 1993:528).

Liberation theology thus focuses on the oppressive structures which are the fruit of exploitation and injustice. When human beings sin, they create structures of sin, which, in their turn make them sin. These are the structures in which "the sins of unsolidarity are crystallized" (Faus 1993:537). Father Oscar Romero defined social sin precisely as "the crystallization of individual egoisms in permanent structures which maintain this sin and exert its power over the great majorities" (Faus 1993:537). As Latin American liberation theology exists in the midst of those who are the main victims of structural sin, it sees its task as combating these sinful structures instead of stressing the sins of individuals. That does not mean that individuals are not held responsible for their sins. It just means that individuals are both responsible for and are victims of sin.

For liberation theology, sin builds its dominion upon human passivity. Therefore, human beings need to gain awareness of that situation as well as to be empowered to overcome the structures of oppression and injustice. Here lies the second major difference between liberation theology and Christian realism concerning their understanding of sin. In liberationist thought, sin needs to be overcome, and it can be so. Grace is the instrument through which people are freed from sin. To be sure, Niebuhr also describes the role of Grace in very similar language. He sees Grace as the power of God in and over human beings, which enables them to become what they truly ought to be. He affirms that Grace is synonymous with the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, the spirit of God indwelling in human beings. However, Niebuhr explicitly states that this indwelling Spirit never means a destruction of human selfhood. In other words, Grace does not annihilate human nature; nor does it end with sin completely. According to him, human life and history cannot complete themselves, and sin is precisely related to the abortive attempts to complete them. It is this sense of completeness beyond human incompleteness in history that enables human beings to be aware of the limits of human possibilities, and to depend on the revelation of God beyond those limits, by faith.

Liberation theology, on the other hand, understands Grace as God's solidarity with the poor and oppressed. Thus, Grace "is liberation from sin and the achievement of freedom" (Comblin 1993:528). Liberation theologians see some continuity between human selfhood, and the Spirit of God. However, that continuity is mainly understood in terms of the connection between God's action and human action. Indeed, Grace, that is, God's action, "does not destroy or suppress or diminish or replace anything in human action... On the contrary, the presence of God's grace makes human action more fully human, with more initiative, more spontaneity, more autonomy, than if grace were not present" (Comblin 1993:529). Grace enters human history, and manifests itself in the lives of those who suffer. It is hidden in the history of the oppressed, producing resistance, faith and hope.

In spite of the enthusiasm of its early days, Latin American liberation theology cannot be easily charged as soft utopianism any more. Its understanding of sin and grace demonstrates this. Liberation theologians no longer expect the overthrow of all systems of domination and oppression in the world once and for all. Instead, they are aware of the fact that there will always be in human history a struggle against evil and sinful structures of oppression. But any time that the poor win their rights or that a specific system of domination is overthrown, there is victory in the struggle for liberation. Complete justice might never be achieved in history, but this does not mean that the struggles for justice are ineffectual. As Comblin says it, "God's grace is not ineffectual... Its effects are perceptible even if they do not bring about in this world what is reserved for the end of time. Grace does not destroy determinisms, inertia, or the weight of the past and of structures. Nevertheless, it introduces a new element, a force which revives the hope of the oppressed" (1993:531). Whereas sin is the negation of God's will to humankind, grace is its affirmation, and the guarantee that God is taking the side of those who are being prevented—by the structures of sin—from fulfilling their full realization as human beings. Grace is God's liberating action in history, which is directed towards building up a new society.⁵

LIBERATION THEOLOGY'S CONCEPTION OF POWER

One will rarely encounter any systematic approach to power by Latin American liberation theologians. They seem, instead, to be much more concerned with the reality of powerlessness of those who experience oppression, exploitation, and injustice. That is not to say, however, that liberation theologians do not speak about power. Their writings are replete of expres-

sions that are related to power, such as the frequent references to the powerful and the powerless. But because liberation theologians often divide society into those who have power and those who lack power, they tend to have an ambiguous approach to power, and tend to avoid any conceptualization of this word.

One of the Latin American theologians who most systematically approach the issue of power is Jose Miguez Bonino. His views on power can engage Niebuhr, because he explicitly attends to political power, and also because of his use of his Protestant heritage in a respectable and amicable conversation with Roman Catholic tradition. Miguez Bonino's political ethics places the Spirit of God as "the ultimate power that addresses earthly powers and powerlessness" (Schubeck 1993:205). He understands that the Spirit of God represents Christ's active presence in the world, through which God's kingdom is manifest. In his political ethics the kingdom functions as the ultimate standard of truth and justice. It judges the unjust and encourages all to commit themselves to the victims of injustice. Thomas Schubeck describes Miguez Bonino's project as one that seeks to develop "an ethics that relates God's power to political power" (1993:205).

Miguez Bonino sees power in ambivalent ways. As enabling, power is the possibility of hope's realization. Nevertheless, as restricting, power is the limit of its possibility. He complains of those who have mythologized power, elevating it to the category of an abstract entity, and understands that a Christian political ethics' first task is to identify and locate power within concrete political relations. Therefore, he classifies political power into four different concrete types of social relations: (1) the power to affect and control matters of economic decisions; (2) the power to affect and control the matters of political decision; (3) the power to affect and control an ideological apparatus; (4) and the power to affect or control the disposition of force, that is to say, the ability to use physical force or coercion to compel obedience and restrain deviancy.

Miguez Bonino affirms that if one controls all these four kinds of power, one would have an absolute power. However, that is not what usually happens in democratic societies. There are tensions, balances, controls and agreements among the various sectors of society, and everyone participates

⁵ Ronald Stone affirms that on this point liberation theology is strong and Christian realism is weak. For him, "Realism did not emphasize sufficiently the possibilities of a new humanity in a new society and those possibilities are essential to keep Christian political thinking from becoming reactionary and defensive" (1977:184).

in these relations. His concern is with how one should participate in these relations as Christian vis-à-vis the standards of love, justice, and peace of the kingdom of God. For him, the ambivalent character of the human exercise of power—whose historical signs are seen in absolutism and oppression—makes it difficult for Christians to know how to deal with it. Most Christians when dealing with questions of power “have oscillated between the poles of absolute rejection and total submission—between the cult of powerlessness and the claims to exercise absolute power” (Miguez Bonino 1983:95). Christians usually have a hard time trying to relate political power to God’s power. On one hand, those who affirm that all power belongs to God tend to derive from this statement a theory of church power. On the other hand, those who are more aware of the demonic are frequently led to a policy of absolute withdrawal. Miguez Bonino proposes a theological ethics of politics that seeks equilibrium in the use of political power by subjecting the whole question of power to a careful theological analysis.

Miguez Bonino does not avoid the doctrine of God’s omnipotence. However, he avoids making this affirmation of God’s power in any abstract manner. The idea that all power belongs to God is used to affirm the confidence in God’s promised acts of deliverance. God’s “is the power that prevails over the chaos, that sets limits to the onslaught of the forces of destruction and ensures the conditions needed for human life and prosperity” (Miguez Bonino 1983: 96). So, in its positive features, power is defined as the power of God, that is to say, God’s active presence in the world through “those powerful acts of liberation, protection, vengeance, or punishment that correspond to his faithfulness to his people and to the whole of humankind. In other words, God’s power is his justice in action—in defense of the weak, judgement of the unjust, protection of the powerless, and strengthening of those to whom he has given a mission” (Miguez Bonino 1983:96).

This power of God is affirmed in the midst of conflict in a world where injustice, oppression, and arrogance are rampant, and is mediated by human agents. Those agents are empowered and commissioned to execute God’s righteous judgements of deliverance and of punishment. But if, on one hand, human exercise of power works as a mediation of God’s power and justice in history, on the other hand it tends to absolutize itself and to negate justice. Here resides the ambivalence of the human exercise of power. It can either serve God’s justice and peace or it can negate those things. For those power-bearers who overreach themselves and thwart justice, God retains his own authority to judge and overthrow them within the conflicts of history.

Miguez Bonino's view of power resembles Niebuhr's discussion of power in several points. However, because he emphasizes a divine intervention in history that is alien to Niebuhr, he presents a different solution to the corruption of the structures of power. Whereas Niebuhr stresses the need for a balance of power so that one power can check the other, Miguez Bonino points to Jesus Christ who paradigmatically disclosed God's rule of justice. Through Jesus' resurrection that rule of justice was "destined to be the true future and the inescapable judgement of all political life" (1983:99). Both men start with a reality of ambiguity in the human exercise of power, and both believe that society must seek to be the most just it can be. It seems, however, that despite his awareness of the limitations of human beings to achieve the standard of justice and peace foreseen in the paradigm of the kingdom, Miguez Bonino is more hopeful than Niebuhr concerning the levels of justice that human societies can achieve.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY, JUSTICE AND LOVE

Both justice and love are pervasive themes in the writings of Latin America liberation theology. What I want to do here is to decipher the meaning of these words for Latin American liberation theologians, to explain how they relate to each other, and, finally, to compare liberation theology's view on these concepts with Niebuhr's understanding of them.

As Robert McAfee Brown has pointed out, for most liberation theologians the central message of the Bible can be expressed in the sentence, "To know God is to do justice" (Brown 1978:90). By affirming that, liberation theologians first and foremost intent to state that to know God does not mean to engage in a private piety, or subscribe to certain orthodox statements, or worship correctly. Instead, it means "to practice justice and right, to defend the cause of the poor and needy." This same kind of attitude defined above as "to do justice" sometimes can also be described by liberation theologians as an act of love. Camilo Torres, a priest who became a revolutionary in Colombia, quit exercising his priestly duties because they became a diversion from his duties of love toward those who were being oppressed and destroyed by an unjust order. Like Ernesto Che Guevara, Torres understood his involvement in an armed revolutionary movement as an act of love. He affirmed that he had ceased to say Mass in order to practice love for people in temporal, economic and social spheres (Brown 1978:93). So, love and justice seem to be

closely related in the praxis of liberation. But how are these words defined by liberation theologians?

Despite the central place given to the theme of justice, liberation theologians rarely approach it with any theoretical definition thought in mind. In order to understand what justice is and what it requires, liberation theology begins by denouncing and condemning “the grave injustices rampant in Latin America” (Gutierrez 1986: 114).⁶ That fact should be no surprise for anyone, since one of the pillars of liberation theology is the affirmation that theology is not “a set of timeless truths,” but rather “a certain kind of reflection on what is going on in very specific situations” (Brown 1979:13). Liberation theology analyzes the injustices experienced by the oppressed, and defines those injustices through the use of specific words such as slavery, humiliation, exploitation, and poverty, among others. Once it has defined in concrete terms those situations of injustice and oppression, liberation theology sets as its main task to oppose and reject those injustices. Then, a step further is taken. Liberation theologians establish that injustice is not only a condition or circumstance; it is rather structured, institutionalized, and systematized. Thus the system that produces injustice is itself called into question.

So, liberation theology is committed with the struggle to abolish injustice and to build a new society, to free the oppressed from all forms of exploration in order to create the possibility of a more human and more dignified life—that is the creation of a new humanity (Gutierrez 1986:307). From the viewpoint of the Latin American poor, to oppose injustice in the forms that it affects that social context means to oppose the system that produces it. This system is opposed as a totality, which excludes and negates the existence of those who live in the periphery of the world, in the poorer countries. Justice can only be achieved if there is “a negation of the negation,” that is to say, a transcendence of this totality, allowing these “others” to appear and demands their rights, i.e., justice (Dussel 1988:231ff.).

For Latin American liberation theology, justice presumes some freedom of choice. People are victims of injustice because they have no alternative. The violence of the system forces them to capitulate before the situations of exploitation, especially regarding their hard and unjust conditions of work.

⁶ As Karen Lebacqz has put it, “liberation theology presents in the first place, therefore, *a theory of injustice*” (Lebacqz 1986:104).

As Rubem Alves states, this systemic violence that keep the poor from being free and experiencing justice,

... is whatever denies him a future, whatever aborts his project to create a new tomorrow; it is the power that keeps him prisoner of the futureless structures of a futureless world. Violence is the power of defuturization, which strives to close man's consciousness to the future and the future to man's consciousness. Violence is the power that denies to man the possibility of exercising his freedom for himself, by making it a function of the project of the master (Alves 1969:111).

In light of all this, liberation theology ends up defining justice as the acts of God in history to free the oppressed from this institutionalized violence. "Justice is what God does," that is, "to liberate and love the poor." Under this view of justice one discovers that there is no separation between love and justice. "God's justice is God's love or compassion on those who suffer. God's love is God's justice or liberation of the oppressed" (Lebacqz 1986:107). There can be no justice without love, because true justice is the establishment and maintenance of right relationships, and that cannot happen apart from love. Latin American liberation theology understands that whenever Christianity has differentiated one from another it has made a disastrous mistake. Gutierrez has said that the gratuitous gift of God's love calls upon us to break with sin, injustice and death in contemporary Latin America, and to stand in solidarity with the poor and dispossessed. According to him, this is love, and this is the purpose of our freedom (Gutierrez 1996).

For Niebuhr, love is an ultimate ideal that regulates justice. Principles of justice such as freedom and equality are the expressions of love in society, or the forms that love takes in social life. Liberation theology takes a step further and says that love and justice can be interchangeable terms to speak of God's acts of liberation in history.

CHRISTIAN REALISM AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY AS COMPLEMENTARY PUBLIC THEOLOGIES

Christian realism and liberation theology cannot be treated on an either/or basis. They are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary: they can function as good partners in addressing the problems of our society from a theological perspective.

As I have shown in this essay, Latin American liberation theology can be conceived as a kind of Christian realism, since it starts with the analysis of the reality surrounding it. All theological reflections in liberation theology are born from the reality lived and experienced by most Latin Americans and from a commitment with that reality. Any situation in which oppression, poverty, and exploitation are constantly present, is considered to be a fruit of sin and self-interest.

Sin is mainly understood as a structural condition. At this point it is important to notice that liberation theology lacks a more profound analysis of the ultimate origin of sin, in order to deepen its reflection about structural sin. Here Niebuhr can be extremely helpful to liberation theology as a resource. Some Latin American liberation theologians like Jose Miguez Bonino and Rubem Alves seem to be aware of that. As Stone notices, Alves has made use of this resource, turning to Niebuhr “to explain in Augustinian terms how the powerful pridefully justify their self-interested domination in moral rationalizations” (Alves 1969:186).

The other face of the coin is that liberation theology can hold a more optimistic view of the possibilities of human achievement in history in comparison to Christian realism, because it places a special emphasis on the resurrection of Christ, and on the power of God to intervene in human history as well as to oppose the powers of oppression and destruction. Whereas Niebuhr has a more negative understanding of power, and warns society against its perils, liberation theology’s approach to power is more complex, allowing for a more positive understanding of it. Liberation theologians are aware of the perils presented by the accumulation of power, but since they are speaking from the reality of those who have been victimized by oppression and domination, they feel that the main issue they need to address is how to empower the powerless. So, they place God as the ultimate source of power and justice, and as one who can enter human history and take sides with the oppressed. In spite of these different perspectives on power, one cannot say that liberation theology’s and Christian realism’s approaches to this topic are incompatible. Niebuhr, speaking mainly to the powerful, alerts against the perils of the accumulation of power and urges for a balance of power for the sake of justice. Liberation theologians are also interested in balance of power, but from the perspective of those who lack it. So, by emphasizing the empowerment of the powerless, liberation theology also contributes to a more just and balanced world.

Finally, both theories are seriously concerned with social justice, with equality and freedom. For Niebuhr, love is an ideal standard, and justice is the statement of that standard in societal relations. For liberation theology, on the other hand, love and justice exist together, and cannot be understood apart from each other. Solidarity with the poor is an act of love, and the struggles for liberation an act of justice. On this point, Niebuhr can probably help liberation theologians in a move from their initial romantic expectations about the new society to the reality of the continuous struggle for justice, since justice will never be completely satisfied in history. On that regard, theologians such as Juan Sobrino and Jose Miguez Bonino have made clear statements about the historical limits to the achievement of a just society. This indicates that in its three decades of existence liberation theology has matured and made some changes in its initial romanticism. On the other hand, liberation theology has kept its strong emphasis on the kingdom of God—with its tension between the “already” and the “not yet.” Therefore, Latin American liberation theology holds more hope for a better future than Christian realism does.

For all this, Christian realism and liberation theology can and should become partners in the development of Christian public theology for our new globalized reality. I really believe that had Niebuhr lived to see the post cold war world, he would probably be much more supportive of liberation theologies, and would realize that they could not be confused either with the social gospel or with Marxism. Liberation theologies are still a new voice, coming from the margins of the world, and as such, they should be taken seriously as a factor among others in our present reading of “reality.”

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Rapt in the Name: The Ramnamis, Ramnam, and Untouchable Religion in Central India. By Ramdas Lamb. SUNY Press, 2002, x and 237 pages.

In November, 2000, the eastern sliver of Madhya Pradesh, a state in central India, was carved off to create a new state named Chhattisgarh. This new state is home to one of the largest populations of *Dalit* (untouchable) and tribal communities in India, and is also, not surprisingly, one of the poorest regions in the nation. Though the religions of Madhya Pradesh, called the Central Provinces under the Raj, have been of great interest to researchers for some time, few scholars have attempted to investigate the religious life of Chhattisgarh as a distinct region. Ramdas Lamb's *Rapt in the Name* is among the first to do so. Lamb examines the Ramnamis, an "antinomian devotional sect" (ix) which originated among the *chamars* of eastern Chhattisgarh in the 1890s. The *chamars*—traditionally leather workers but now rarely so—are the largest *Dalit* community in India and are near the bottom of India's socio-religious hierarchy.

Lamb's text is an excellent complement to Saurabh Dube's *Untouchable Pasts: Religion, Identity, and Power among a Central Indian Community, 1780-1950* (1998), which focused on another religious movement among the Chhattisgarhi *chamars*, the Satnami *Samaj* ("Society"). The Satnami movement was so successful among Chhattisgarhi *chamars*, in fact, that many now list *satnami* as their caste name. Both texts appear in the outstanding SUNY series in Hindu Studies, ably edited by Wendy Doniger.

Rapt in the Name begins with an historical overview of the interaction of orthodox, upper-caste Hinduism, on the one hand, and the popular religiosity of India's masses, on the other. Lamb summarizes the state of scholarship on the topic and provides succinct and useful definitions for the terms scholars have used to describe it (e.g. brahmanization, sanskritization, vedacization, etc.).

The two central practices of Ramnami devotion are chanting *Ramnam* ("the name of Ram") and reciting *Ramkatha* ("the story of Ram"). These practices are shared by the larger Ram tradition in India, and so Lamb offers, in Chapter Two, an account of the historical development of that tradition, and in particular of the *Ramkatha*. The Sanskritic and orthodox versions of the Ram story, such as Valmiki's *Ramayana*, present him as a very human hero with, at most, suggestions of divinity. But in later vernacular versions of the story such as Tulsidas's sixteenth-century *Ramcaritmanas* (*Manas*), Ram and everyone associated him (e.g. his wife, Sita) undergo a

process of apotheosis. In addition, whereas texts such as the *Ramayana* tend to reinforce the predominance of brahmans and the impurity of the lower castes, texts such as the *Manas* undermine this hierarchical perspective by emphasizing the devotion of low-caste Ram *bhaktas* (devotees).

What makes Chhattisgarh such an interesting field of study is the unusually high degree of religious ferment in the region, particularly among the lower castes. In Chapter Four, Lamb briefly discusses two other religious movements prominent in the region, the Kabirpanthis and the Satnamis. Though the Kabirpanth in Banaras, that bastion of Hindu orthodoxy, has become a rather upper-caste sect, the Chhattisgarhi *sakha* ("branch") has managed to retain its lower-caste appeal. The Satnami movement originated with a Chhattisgarhi guru (Ghasidas, 1756-1850) but was almost certainly inspired by other earlier movements of same name. Both the Kabirpanthis and the Satnamis are religiously indebted to Kabir and the *sant* tradition of which he was a part. The orthodox hierarchy has rejected both movements, primarily because they draw upon low- and out-caste communities and yet aspire to religious and social equality with upper-caste Hindus.

Parasuram, the founder of the Ramnami *Samaj*, was born a *chamar*, in a poor village in eastern Chhattisgarh, midway through the nineteenth century. Stricken with a disease many believed to be leprosy in his mid-thirties, Parasuram decided to leave home, renouncing family life, in order to spare his family the shame and ostracism his disease would bring them. On the eve of his departure he had an encounter with a mysterious *sadhu*, a wandering ascetic who told him that Lord Ram was pleased with his devotion, and that, if his faith was deep enough, the name of Ram would appear written on his chest during the night. It did, and Parasuram's family and villagers celebrated the miracle. Eventually Parasuram gained a following which he instructed to chant *Ramnam* and recite *Ramkatha*. Parasuram increasingly emphasized *nirgun bhakti* (devotion to Ram "without properties," as equivalent to *Brahman*, the principle of Being articulated in some more philosophically-oriented traditions of Hinduism) and insisted that the only devotional act necessary was chanting *Ramnam*. Like the Kabirpanthis and Satnamis, the Ramnamis drew the ire of upper-caste Hindus, particularly because of their practice of tattooing "Ram" (rama) on their bodies to demonstrate devotion and to link themselves with Parasuram. The upper-caste Hindus believed the practice, which associated Ram's name with the bodies of impure outcastes, was sacrilegious.

In addition to tattooing Ram on their bodies, the Ramnamis have developed several other distinctive practices. They are encouraged to wear *ordhni*, cloth covered entirely with the name of Ram, when chanting *Ramnam* (thus the title's play on words). Ramnami men—and occasionally women—wear *mukut* (literally, “crown”), a hat made with peacock feathers, which are traditionally associated with incarnations of Vishnu such as Ram. In addition, the *Samaj* holds an annual *mela* (festival) which brings together Ramnamis from around Chhattisgarh, as well as visitors from other religious communities. Each *mela* is centered on a *stambha*, a large pillar covered with *Ramnam*. More than a dozen fine black and white photographs complement Lamb's description of these visually stunning practices.

In Chapter Six, Lamb demonstrates how the Ramnamis localized the *Ramkatha*, which, as already mentioned, is not unique to the Ramnamis. In the early days of the *Samaj*, the *Manas* was used primarily as a source of *mantras* perceived to be spiritually efficacious. As literacy increased in the community, Ramnamis began to realize that the *Manas* contained some verses and sections which upheld the dominance of brahmans and denigrated the lower castes. This discovery motivated Ramnamis to become more literate in order to be able to choose verses from the corpus that were more positive in their presentation of lower castes. At Ramnami *bhajans*, where these verses were chanted, or exchanged in philosophical debate (called “*takkar*”), a distinctly Ramnami *Ramkatha* began to emerge. The process continues today, and the *Ramkatha* has come to be recited less for the spiritual efficacy of its phrases than for the meaning contained therein. Perhaps the greatest strength of this chapter, and indeed the entire volume, is that Lamb consistently presents the Ramnamis as a dynamic, evolving community in which religious symbols are not static, timeless forms, but are rather constantly reinvented and given new meanings in response to changes within the *Samaj* and in the world about it.

Lamb includes six biographical sketches of Ramnamis in the penultimate chapter. With these biographical sketches, Lamb exhibits the diversity of the Ramnami community. Chhattisgarhis were attracted to the Ramnami movement for various reasons. Some were impressed by the aesthetic beauty of Ramnami *bhajans*. Others experienced psychological healing within the community. Still others saw in the Ramnami *Samaj* a community which refused to accept brahmanical orthodoxy but instead flaunted its autonomy and distinctiveness. The biographical sketches also highlight the creativity, freedom and initiative of female Ramnamis.

In the final chapter Lamb compares the various ways that low-caste religious groups prevalent in Chhattisgarh have attempted to relate to the orthodox religious system of India. Within the Kabirpanthi, Satnami, and Ramnami communities, three distinct approaches can be discerned. The Kabirpanthis have attempted to elevate their status in the Indian socio-religious hierarchy by sanskritizing their religious practices, that is, by bringing their beliefs, rituals and symbols more closely in line with those of the dominant Hindu castes. The Satnamis, on the other hand, have increasingly sought the same results by political agitation. Unlike these two movements, the Ramnami *Samaj* has never sought caste-Hindu status. Rather, Ramnamis have attempted to remain as independent as possible from the control of brahmanical Hinduism. Unlike most low-caste religious movements, the Ramnamis have not attempted to hide their distinctive religious practices; instead, they have flaunted them as a source of identity and pride. This approach has caused the Satnamis and Kabirpanthis to resent the Ramnamis. The Satnamis and Kabirpanthis believe that the behavior of Ramnamis undermines their efforts to achieve social and religious elevation.

The volume includes two appendices. The first discusses the distinctive features of two major categories of scripture in the Hindu tradition, *shruti* and *smriti*. The second appendix discusses the last section of Valmiki's *Ramayana*, which many believe to be a brahmanical insertion because it contains the violent story of a low-caste Hindu beheaded by Ram for having the audacity to practice austerities (austerities are considered by the orthodox to be restricted to upper-caste Hindus). Both appendices are helpful, though the information they contain may have been more useful if integrated into earlier chapters.

Rapt in the Name is an attractive, well-written, thoroughly researched and insightful text. It would be most appreciated by scholars of Indian religions, especially those interested in learning more about the religious experience of *Dalits* than is generally possible in texts on Hinduism. But because it is so clearly written, *Rapt in the Name* would also be accessible to students with a minimum of exposure to Hinduism and would help balance introductory texts on the subject which are, with several notable exceptions, generally more focused on upper-caste and brahmanical Hinduism.

CHAD MULLET BAUMAN
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Christianity, Art and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the Struggle for Justice. By John W. de Gruchy. Cambridge University Press, 2001, 254 pages.

In *Christianity, Art and Transformation*, Reformed theologian John de Gruchy, Professor of Christian Studies at the University of Cape Town, sets for himself the ambitious task of exploring the “deep underlying relationship between theological conviction, aesthetics and ethics” (p.1). He argues that art, and particularly the visual

arts, has the power to dehumanize or humanize, to enslave or free, to damn or redeem. Thus, questions of the good, the right, and the beautiful rightly confront the artist. Consequently, de Gruchy calls the church to unite with those artistic efforts that challenge the images in the world that “lead to the destruction of human life and the environment,” thereby opening up “possibilities of transformation” to a more just society (p.253).

De Gruchy makes his case over the course of three main parts, each comprised of two chapters. Part One tells of how Christianity became suspicious of art and how the modern age drove a wedge between art and religion, and even between art and ethics. Chapter one traces the history of Christianity’s suspicion of art, and recalls how the early church saw the images of imperial Rome as idolatrous; the Iconoclastic Controversy of the 8th century issued in the removal of all images from churches; the Reformation imparted a Protestant iconoclasm; and the Council of Trent called for more chaste art. In the end, de Gruchy balances this history by suggesting that not all art is idolatrous, and it can represent the goodness and truth of God and our lives.

Chapter two recounts the development of philosophical aesthetics during the Enlightenment and the secularization of Western art. Three figures receive special treatment – Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche. De Gruchy suggests that with Kant “art has been privatized and secularized” (p.59); with Hegel “[w]orks of art are expressions of human consciousness” (p.60); and with Nietzsche one must “prevent reason and morality from controlling the aesthetic” (p.66). The upshot is that not only has art been severed from religion and ethics but it has also forfeited its social role. Art can no longer speak of the good, the right, and the beautiful, but is relegated to personal taste and ideological control. For de Gruchy, however, aesthetics must be reconnected to truth and morality, and indeed to theology.

Part Two, then, is a more direct theological reflection on aesthetics and the arts with attention given to the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Karl Barth, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In chapter three, de Gruchy brings Balthasar, Barth, and Bonhoeffer into critical dialogue. Balthasar holds that Christian theology should link the good, the true and the beautiful with God's beauty. Thus, the arts are indispensable for a good life, and indeed for Christian faith and discipleship. For Barth, however, true beauty refers to God's beauty, and points us to God's glory and holiness. We experience God's beauty through God's "triunity," which is known in Jesus Christ (p.114). But with Bonhoeffer, one gets a "mediating theology" that "makes it possible to hold in creative tension the revelation of God's beauty in the event of Jesus Christ alone (Barth), and in nature and art as well (Balthasar)" (p.117). Christian theological aesthetics, therefore, seeks to participate in the drama of world redemption, not only through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ but through world history.

Chapter four covers Bonhoeffer's theological aesthetics and stresses his desire to reunite theology, ethics, and aesthetics. Drawing on the musical metaphor of polyphony, Bonhoeffer sought a "blending" of these themes, resulting in a "polyphony of life" (p.160). That is, Bonhoeffer sought an "aesthetic existence," which is akin to Kierkegaard's "living poetically" or John Dewey's "integration of art into life" or Wilhelm Dilthey's "philosophy of life" (p.151). Put more theologically, "aesthetic existence" is like the Chalcedonian Definition, in that it seeks "a blending of the bodily and the spiritual without their confusion..." (p.161). The result is "a genuine Christian 'worldliness'" (p.167). It is a way of being that fosters a unity of all things in Christ and in the world.

Part Three focuses on "aesthetic praxis" and takes up the social role of the arts. An important theme for chapter five is the role of architecture in society and centers on de Gruchy's native South Africa, particularly Cape Town. The architectural story of Cape Town is one of European colonialism and tells of Apartheid's power relations and social stratification. Beyond Cape Town's architecture, however, another theme emerges, "the early development of black art in South Africa," which "speaks of art as an 'intervention' which introduces a deeper discourse into the public square, resisting structures of power which dehumanize" (p.196). Artistic creativity has the capacity to "break culture open," making room in the public square for "transformation" to a more just and free society (p.193). For de Gruchy, art can in some sense redeem and has the capacity to participate in the drama of world redemption.

Chapter six raises the question of the role of art in the church. The discussion once again focuses on architecture, and de Gruchy contends that the church building is “an icon in the world,” one which “reflects, reinforces or helps create the values of society” (p.218). Not only, then, should a church building be structured in such a way that it is conducive to worship but it should symbolize to the world the drama of God’s redemptive history. “Bad taste,” therefore, or that which does not reflect the good or the righteousness of God, has no place in the city or in the church. In this way, the public square and the church are connected by “aesthetic experience.”

As noted at the beginning, de Gruchy’s project is ambitious. For the most part, he succeeds in developing a relationship between theology, aesthetics and ethics. At the same time, it would be understandable if one were to quibble about any one of the parts that go into making the whole. For instance, the history of Christianity and art and the secularization of Western art are treated somewhat quickly, often covering major time periods and figures in shorthand. Similarly, uneven treatment is given to Balthasar, Barth, and Bonhoeffer, such that one may wonder if each figure is given his due.

Nonetheless, it is a work that will be interesting and suggestive for scholars and theologians, and creative and encouraging for pastors and church leaders. In the latter’s case, de Gruchy does much to empower a robust use of art in Christian architecture, liturgy, and life. *Christianity, Art and Transformation* is a call, indeed a demand, for Christians to engage, transform, and redeem the art forms of our day.

TODD V. CIOFFI
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. By Joel Marcus. Doubleday, 1999, xix and 569 pages.

The long awaited replacement to C. S. Mann’s 1986 volume in *The Anchor Bible* series has finally arrived—at least in part—in the first volume of Joel Marcus’ commentary on the Gospel of Mark. Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Duke Divinity School, Marcus provides first-rate biblical scholarship that is both historically insightful and theologically engaging. As the first of a projected two-volume set (going only through Mark 8:21), this work also represents the beginning of a useful one-stop resource for Mark’s modern readers.

Marcus uses the well-known Anchor Bible format: a “new” translation of the text (3-14), followed by a general introduction (17-79), followed by a

passage-by-passage commentary on the text (137-515). Every chapter of the commentary begins with an introduction, dividing then into smaller subunits, each of which consists of sections for “TRANSLATION,” “NOTES” and “COMMENT.” The NOTES, Marcus writes, “explain choices made in the TRANSLATION, highlight exegetical problems with respect to specific words and phrases...and convey other technical information” (80). By contrast, COMMENT sections represent more generalized exposition. They are, in Marcus’ words, “the heart of the commentary” (80), presenting the author’s “vision of what each pericope is centrally about” (81).

Although Marcus inherits rather than creates this format, it does produce a few noteworthy problems, particularly when combined with the author’s own goal of comprehensiveness. Marcus, for instance, suggests that the “impatient” or less “technically minded” reader “may safely skip the NOTES and go directly to the COMMENT, though they will often find that the COMMENT sends them back to individual NOTES” (80). However, such references from COMMENT to NOTES are frequent enough to frustrate those choosing to follow Marcus’ advice, most notably “the pastor trying to get a ‘fix’ on a particular passage for a Sunday sermon” (80). Related to this problem, Marcus’ tends to use the NOTES as scholarship summaries in which no exegetical stone is left unturned (e.g., the discussion of the significance of the number “four thousand” at Mark 8:9). Consequently, readers interested primarily in “the heart of the commentary” may find themselves not only reading in two places at once, but also sifting through the history of scholarship on a specific interpretive detail, hoping to find in the NOTES the exegetical justification for what Marcus claims (in the COMMENT!) to be a passage’s central claim. The fact that Marcus discusses redaction-critical issues (which defy categorization within this format) at the beginning of his COMMENT sections will also frustrate the non-scholar whom Marcus seeks especially to address there. Here again the drive for scholarly comprehensiveness creates a less readable commentary.

At the same time, the all-encompassing scope of this work has its advantages. The massive bibliography (85-133) will serve research-oriented readers well—although books such as Brian Blount’s *Go Preach!* (Orbis, 1998) and Susan Garrett’s *The Temptations of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (Eerdmans, 1998) should have been included before publication. Also, as with any great resource work, Marcus’ commentary contains a host of charts (twenty to be precise) that aid the reader in understanding everything from

Mark's use of doublet sayings vis-à-vis Matthew and Luke (43), to the relationship between Mark's baptismal formulae and those of other NT writers (174), to Mark's use of "insider/outsider" language (303). Finally, the comprehensive nature of the Introduction (17-79) makes it not only an excellent preamble to this particular commentary, but also a kind of self-contained introduction to the second gospel as a whole. With well-written and thorough discussions of authorship, historical setting, synoptic relationships, literary composition, and theology, Marcus' introduction can be used by a number of groups—for instance, an upper level undergraduate class or a church school class—that choose not to read the commentary itself.

Readers familiar with Marcus' *The Way of the Lord* (Westminster John Knox, 1992) will not be surprised to find in this commentary a consistent focus on scriptural echoes both strong and faint. Understandably for a commentary, however, here Marcus moves well beyond the issue of Mark's indebtedness to Second Isaiah and into the seemingly limitless world of scripture in general. Indeed, even when overstated, the scriptural allusions Marcus finds constitute one of the most interesting and thought-provoking aspects of the book, a particularly good example being his discussion of the "Exodus background" to Mark 8:1-9 (Jesus' second feeding miracle). Marcus' expertise in Jewish backgrounds also makes for one of the most lucid and insightful interpretations of Mark 7:1-23 (the debate over purity and defilement) that this reviewer has read.

Marcus' exegesis offers a refreshing balance between historical and theological concerns, with neither concern dominating the commentary at the expense of the other. In regard to the former concern, noteworthy is Marcus' suggestion that Mark's story originally belonged to a liturgical—if not specifically baptismal—setting, namely as "a dramatization of the good news" staged by numerous readers (69). In addition, Marcus insightfully notes the possibility that Mark intended to emphasize for his community the spiritual presence of its physically absent Lord (78, 158, 237-8, 288, 435, 437-38).

Theologically speaking, Marcus brings God to the interpretive forefront as a major character/actor in the gospel story. His overtly theological approach begins with an introductory discussion of God as apocalyptic savior who, in the person of Jesus, liberates the world from its bondage to the "strong man" (72), and continues through virtually every chapter of the commentary. Not surprisingly given Marcus' interest in apocalyptic eschatology, God frequently emerges in discussions of this subject. Less expected insights abound

as well, however, such as Marcus' claim that, when Jesus calls his first disciples (Mark 1:16-20), "all human reticence has been instantaneously washed away because *God* has arrived on the scene...and it is *his* compelling voice that speaks through Jesus' summons" (185).

There are, however, theological possibilities that Marcus overlooks. Perhaps most notably, his discussion of Jesus' baptism at Mark 1:10 follows the interpretations of Matthew and Luke, who change Mark's preposition *eis* ("into") to *epi* ("upon") so as to render the dove imagery more palatable ("and the Spirit like a dove descended upon him"). However, Mark's choice of words—"and the Spirit descended *into* him (*eis auton*)"—although logistically difficult, makes the more radical theological claim that God, quite literally, *possesses* Jesus at his baptism. As an exegete concerned with Mark's theology and, more specifically, God's/Jesus' presence in the story/community, Marcus would do well to read Mark 1:10 on its own terms and reconsider its enormous theological significance for interpreting Mark's entire story.

Overall, Marcus' balance between rigorous scholarship and theological insight constitutes the greatest strength of this volume. Too often commentaries either achieve scholarly sophistication at the expense of theology or merely offer theological interpretation without sufficient exegetical justification. Due to the comprehensive nature of this commentary (not to mention Marcus' own skills as biblical theologian), both of these extremes are avoided. Though the volume's sheer size may create problems for lay readers, it will continue to make Mark's gospel theologically relevant to this generation of readers (at the very least), keeping us, in the meantime, hopeful for the volume that is yet to come.

I. BRENT DRIGGERS

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Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender, by Sarah Coakley Blackwell Publishers, 2002, 172 pages

To speak of 'power' brings notions of influence, domination and control to Western 21st century minds. 'Power' is a term that has gained far more popularity in comparison to what has come to be known as its counterpart, 'submission.' It is to questions of 'power' and 'submission', both divine and human, that Coakley turns in *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*. She resists the forced dichotomy between 'power' as liberating and 'submission' as dependent vulnerability and suggests new terms of the debate. With an analysis of the tradition known in the Christian West as

'contemplation,' Coakley demonstrates the possibility of a redefinition of the terms 'power' and 'submission.' In contrast to the secular feminist resistance to 'submission' as harmful dependence, Coakley suggests that the contemplative practices of transparency to and dependence upon God can lead to an understanding of submission that promotes peace and gender equity (xx.)

Coakley presents her argument in three parts. In part one, she considers the ways in which contemplative practice can be "a graced means of human empowerment in the divine which the feminist movement ignores or derides at its peril" (xvii.) She begins in chapter one with a response to the feminist resistance to *kenosis* as perhaps a helpful model for men, but a potentially harmful one to women. Following a detailed analysis of a variety of understandings of *kenosis*, Coakley provides what she sees as 'right' *kenosis* derived from an understanding of Christian contemplative prayer that enables one to hold both vulnerability and empowerment together (p.5.) She moves in chapters two and three to a discussion of the ways in which the tradition of contemplative practice, while potentially a source of wisdom regarding the discernment of right dependence, has been entangled with themes of power, hierarchy and 'submissiveness' (xvii.) Through an analysis of the work of the spiritual director, Dom John Chapman OSB (1865-1933), as well as analysis of Christian iconography and spirituality, psychoanalytic theory, and secular and theological feminism, Coakley reveals the ways in which *right* dependence on God is an elusive goal (p.68.)

In part two, Coakley provides a close analysis of some classic spiritual and philosophical material from the Christian tradition in an effort to warn the reader to avoid reductive interpretations of such classic texts as either a resource for the identification of the 'pure' form of relationality between the divine and human or merely as invitations to sexist submission (p.71.) In chapter four, Coakley examines the *Cloud of Unknowing* in its cultural and historical context and reveals the possible ways in which it is an ancestor to 'modern' Western philosophical thought (p.72.) In chapter five, Coakley provides an account of Enlightenment and Romantic perspectives of the normative male self, and argues that in many ways the views of man promulgated here is one that feminists should not wholly reject (p.89.) And in chapter six, Coakley engages analytic philosophy of religion and demonstrates the ways in which its use of the 'generic male', and its avoidance of the work done in

feminist theology and philosophy, has resulted in the sidelining of significant issues for both feminism and rich traditions of Christian spirituality (p.98.)

In the final part of this work, Coakley addresses Christian doctrine explicitly. She examines primarily the work of Gregory of Nyssa (c.330-c.395) and demonstrates the ways in which he provides possibilities for understanding the implications of contemplative practice for doctrinal exposition (p.109.) In chapter seven, Coakley questions the tendency to read Gregory's trinitarianism only in terms of the 'three men' analogy. Rather, Coakley contends, Gregory's work on the trinity should be read alongside his spiritual writings which demonstrate the complexities of his thoughts on the trinity and his views about gender and epistemological transformation (p.129.) In chapter eight, Coakley continues her work with Gregory of Nyssa and, through engagement with the work of Wittgenstein, argues that the believer's ability to give meaning to the language 'encounter with the risen Christ' is the result of a transformation of the believer's epistemic *apparatus* (p.131.) And finally, in chapter nine, Coakley engages the work of Gregory of Nyssa in conversation with the feminist theorist, Judith Butler. In this process, Coakley demonstrates the ways in which the obsession with the 'body' among secular feminist theorists, in particular, and late twentieth-century Western culture, in general, reveals an eschatological longing that only a theological vision can fulfill (p.153.)

Coakley's efforts in *Powers and Submissions* are best-suited for scholars of religion with interests in theology, spirituality and feminist theory. Each of her essays are written with clarity and conciseness, but the depth and detail of her investigations could leave the lay reader progressing at a snail's pace in an effort to discern Coakley's primary points. For those familiar with the history of Christian thought and philosophy of religion, however, Coakley's work here offers a rich and challenging journey into the variety of interpretations of 'power' and 'submission' and the ways in which these terms have an ambiguous history in Christian theology and spirituality, as well as in feminist theory and analytical philosophy of religion. Through an engagement with the Christian contemplative tradition, Coakley challenges the reader to consider anew the ways in which submission to divine power can be a process of life-giving empowerment. Coakley challenges as well those who find a valuable critical tool in the work of feminist theorists to reconsider those feminist tendencies to view the practice of contemplative prayer as necessarily leading to political apathy and

sexual submission. She is sure to acknowledge the dangers of any form of submission that is de-humanizing and harmful to women. In her efforts to engage the tradition of Christian contemplative prayer, however, Coakley offers a challenge to feminist theorists and speaks to a sense in which, through the practice of silent prayer, 'submission' to divine power can be life-giving and empowering for both women and men.

Finally, it is important to note that the chapters comprising Coakley's book were each written as individual essays "for particular events and deadlines" (preface.) Through reading the book in its entirety, it becomes evident that, while there are common themes throughout, it is difficult to discern the ways in which these essays are interrelated. Coakley expresses in her preface that these essays are centered "on the profound paradox of an inalienable surrender ('submission') to God that—as I argue—must remain the secret ground of even feminist 'empowerment'." However, many of the essays include such a wide variety of interlocutors and address such an assortment of concerns that it often becomes difficult to discern this shared center. Despite this limitation, Coakley's work serves as a valuable resource to any scholar of religion with an interest in the Christian tradition of contemplative prayer, the ways in which this tradition speaks to and potentially redefines the standard binary of 'power' and 'submission', and the significance of this tradition to feminist conceptions of 'submission.'

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Justification and Variegated Nomism, Volume I: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism. Edited by D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid. Mohr Siebeck/ Baker Academic, 2001, xii and 619 pages.

Justification and Variegated Nomism is a projected two-volume set. The current volume, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, will be joined by a volume entitled *The Paradoxes of Paul*. The purpose of project is to reassess the monumental work of E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). This first volume aims to reassess the validity and usefulness of the term "covenantal nomism" as an overarching description of Judaism in the Second Temple period (3).

The contributors covered much of the same material as Sanders, with a few additional witnesses and topics also being assessed: D. A. Carson, "Introduction;" Daniel Falk, "Prayers and Psalms;" Craig A. Evans, "Scripture-Based Stories in the Pseudepigrapha;" Peter Enns, "Expansions of Scripture;" Philip R. Davies, "Didactic Stories;" Richard Bauckham, "Apocalypses;" Robert A. Kugler, "Testaments;" Donald E. Gowan, "Wisdom;" Paul Spilsbury, "Josephus;" Philip S. Alexander, "Torah and Salvation in Tannaitic Literature;" Martin McNamara, "Some Targum Themes;" David M. Hay, "Philo of Alexandria;" Markus Bockmuehl, "1QS and Salvation at Qumran;" Mark A. Seifrid, "Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism;" Roland Deines, "The Pharisees Between 'Judaisms' and 'Common Judaism'." The final lengthy chapter, by D. A. Carson, consists of summaries of each of the articles and an attempt to evaluate this first stage of the project.

This first volume is a tribute to the work of Sanders. The very fact that fifteen scholars are called upon, twenty five years later, to assess the material and theses that Sanders himself proposed, testifies to the importance of his work. More substantively, however, the articles by and large uphold the thesis that "covenantal nomism" appropriately designates the pattern of religion found in the texts: "If the aim was to define a sort of 'lowest common denominator' soteriology that would be recognized by most of the divergent expressions of Judaisms, Sanders's covenantal nomism would serve fairly well" (56); "Sanders's basic assessment of the situation in *Jubilees* seems to be sound" (97). Other conclusions are similar, offering "qualified support" (213) and affirming the absence of merit-based salvation (239).

It is this last point that reveals the most pervasive point of consensus in the book, a point for which Sanders labored hard: "Earlier analyses of the literature of Second Temple Judaism often found merit theology everywhere, and Sanders, as we have seen, is right to warn against a simple arithmetical tit-for-tat notion of payback" (544). Thus, this volume affirms the movement beyond the earlier caricatures of Judaism that blemish the history of New Testament scholarship.

Though generally affirming, the conclusions in support of Sanders are usually qualified, and several of the articles deny altogether the applicability of the term "covenantal nomism" to a particular text. Sometimes the rejection of Sanders's label is perplexing. For example, the assessment of *Joseph and Aseneth* rejects the label "covenantal nomism" in this way: "God's grace is the presupposition, to be sure, but apart from wholesale adoption of Jewish food and purity laws, the conversion of Aseneth could not have taken place" (66).

Oddly, the footnote that follows this sentence ends with the following quote from *PPJ*: “They understood obeying the law as the Jews’ appropriate response to the prior grace of God.” The description of *Joseph and Aseneth* fits Sanders’s description of covenantal nomism. Similarly, the essay on Philo finds it “not very useful to speak of Philo as a representative of ‘covenantal nomism’” (370). And yet, the article goes on to say that Philo “seems to assume . . . biblical claims about God’s election of Israel as a people” (370), and to show Philo’s concern with obedience to the Mosaic law (372). Again, it is doubtful that Sanders would find his view challenged.

The value of this book lies in questions raised by several contributors that push the reader to reflect on what, exactly, has been established once a pattern of religion has been labeled “covenantal nomism.” As Falk points out, this label does not say anything about “the problem of sin, the balance of focus on nationalism and individualism, and most significantly the boundaries of the covenant” (56). Enns raises questions that point out the ambiguity in the term “salvation”: “If salvation can be lost by disobedience—i.e., if obedience is necessary to ‘preserve’ salvation—in what sense can we say with Sanders that ‘salvation’ *depends* on the grace of God? How can there be sins unto death when *election* is the basis of salvation” (97)? Are legalism and covenantal nomism truly antithetical conceptions? Also, several scholars asked whether Sanders’s categories of “getting in” and “staying in” do justice to the texts of Second Temple Judaism (e.g., 98, 298–301). Such issues raise the further question of whether an investigation of the Second Temple texts from the standpoint of Sanders’s Pauline category of “participationist eschatology” might be more fruitful for discovering the contours of salvation that distinguish Paul from his context.

This volume is not without its problems. First, not all the contributors seem aware that Sanders explicitly denies that *Paul’s* pattern of religion is appropriately labeled covenantal nomism (*PPJ*, 511–5). One hopes that the second volume will show greater sensitivity on this point. Second, one contributor contends against Sanders that there is a deep contrast between “the term ‘nomism’ [which] tends to denote a static position,” and covenant which “has reference to a living God . . . a God active in the past, the present and the future” (355). One wonders whether this contributor has carefully considered the identity between covenant and law in passages such as Deuteronomy 4. Finally, the most substantial criticism must be leveled against the editorial hand of D. A. Carson. Although the overall tenor of the various contributions to this volume lends qualified support to Sanders’s thesis, the title, introduction,

and conclusion all steer the reader toward a more critical judgment of his work. Carson concludes, Covenantal nomism “is too doctrinaire, too unsupported by the sources themselves, too reductionistic, too monopolistic” (548). Such a ringing conclusion, while not lacking in rhetorical flourish, hardly does justice to the actual content of the essays. Carson thus detracts from the carefully nuanced studies that he is supposed to be representing.

Justification and Variegated Nomism is for serious students of early Judaism. The discussions delve into the details of primary texts with close and careful readings. In light of the lengthy academic conversation that this book engages, uninitiated readers will likely find it overwhelming. The last 71 pages of the volume consist of several indexes, making the volume accessible for a topical study; however, it is anticipated that the greatest benefit will be found in sitting down with each chapter, and carefully reviewing both the primary text discussed and Sanders’s previous discussion of it.

Overall, this book makes a valuable contribution to the study of Second Temple Judaism in that it raises important questions that have the potential for setting trajectories for fruitful discussion for many years to come.

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Paul’s True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome. By Mark D. Given. Emory Studies in Early Christianity. Trinity Press International, 2001, xix and 219 pages.

Among the many problems that Paul faced during his controversial ministry, and that his interpreters have come up against ever since, is the unsettling impression he sometimes gave of being rhetorically ambiguous, cunning, and even deceptive, or to put it another way, of being sophistic. That, argues Mark Given in this provocative revision of his dissertation, is because he *was*.

Given, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Southwest Missouri State University, begins by noting the present scholarly consensus, developed especially in the thirty years since Hans Dieter Betz’s seminal study, that Paul was rhetorically astute, possibly having received formal rhetorical training. That consensus, says Given, usually assumes both that Paul’s brand

of rhetoric sides more with the philosophic than with the sophistic tradition, and that Paul therefore put his considerable rhetorical skill in the service of “unambiguous and truthful” discourse. But such assumptions depend upon a mistaken notion, increasingly acknowledged as such by classicists, that philosophic and sophistic rhetoric are distinct, antithetical categories. In fact, Given argues, they are inseparably intermingled in the very person who posited the distinction in the first place, Socrates himself. Socrates was a master of ambiguous, cunning, and deceptive effect, all in service of the Truth for the sake of enlightening the truly deceived. As with Socrates, Given stresses, so with the later sophisticated proponent of Truth, Paul.

Signs of ambiguity, cunning, and deception in Pauline passages abound, says Given, though he explores them in three main areas: (1) the Lukan portrait of Paul in Athens in Acts 17; (2) several key texts in the Corinthian letters; and (3) three sections of Romans.

Luke portrays Paul in Athens with ambiguous brush strokes as a new (sophistic) Socrates. Polyvalent words and phrases subtly but unmistakably alert perceptive readers to discover here a multilayered drama and to hear echoes of both Jewish and Greek ideas and figures. In the opening scene, for example, as Paul observes the plethora of idols around him, Luke oddly enough employs a Septuagintalism—“his spirit in him” was provoked—where one would expect only Atticisms. Seeking to explain this highly unusual phrase, Given notes that the word for “provoke” is used in the LXX overwhelmingly of the divine response to idolatry in Israel. This fact, coupled with the recollection that Paul has already been introduced as one who bears the name/presence of Jesus and is endowed with the Holy Spirit, leads to the realization that “his spirit in him” is none other than God’s Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus. At the same time, those steeped in Greek cultural currents would no doubt hear echoes of Socrates, who in post-Platonic manifestations similarly possessed a “deity” that gave him insight and direction. Luke thus sets up readers to see in the following verses an ambiguous Socratic/sophistic Paul in dialogue with the Athenian philosophers. In fact, that is precisely what one finds. Paul in Socratic fashion dupes his seemingly wise but deluded Athenian audience with repeated double messages. So Paul both compliments and insults his listeners by noting with one and the same ambiguous word how “thoroughly religious” and how “thoroughly superstitious” they are, though they could only take him to mean the former even while Luke’s readers hear the lat-

ter. A bit further on Paul says that God has “overlooked” their ignorance of God, though Luke’s informed audience senses he really means by this word that God has “despised” their ignorance. As the speech wraps up, the only way for the philosophers in Athens to join the ranks of the informed is to repent, enabling them to see through the “mask of Paul’s Ambiguity in Athens” to the real esoteric message he presents.

Yet showing a sophistic Paul in Acts, Given notes, demonstrates only that a later generation remembered Paul as rhetorically slippery. But is that the kind of Paul we find in Paul’s own writings? In fact, Given says, when we turn to the Corinthian correspondence that is exactly what we find, notably in 1 Cor 1–4, 1 Cor 9:19–23, and 2 Cor 2:14–4:6. Paul’s willingness to use deception and pretense stands out particularly clearly in 1 Cor 9:19–23. “Just as Plato’s Socrates feels free to break the rules of dialectic if necessary in order to win an argument...so Paul feels free to leave the world of being for that of seeming, ‘to become all things to everyone,’ in order to propagate the Truth....The deceived must first be deceived for their own good.” Rejecting readings of this passage that transpose Paul’s rhetoric of becoming into mere accommodation, or that dismiss it as hyperbole, Given sides with those who see in these verses a Paul who traffics in “deceptive metamorphoses.” This classic missionary text serves as “the prime example...of a sophistic Paul.” Further evidence of Paul’s sophistic tendencies surfaces especially in 2 Cor 4:1–4. Distancing himself from cunning and deceptive practices, Paul in the same breath acknowledges that his “gospel is veiled” to some. Like Socrates’ medicinal *pharmakon*, which is remedy to some but poison to others, Paul’s gospel is both “moronic” and “Wisdom of God,” a mask both transparent and opaque.

Cunning and deception also accompany Paul as he writes to the Romans, according to Given. In Romans 7, for example, Paul praises the Law, all the while showing the Law really to be weak, thus hardly praiseworthy. Sophistic Paul once again plays to two divergent audiences at the same time. But as the letter progresses, at least some (“Judaistic”) readers will have caught on to Paul’s ambiguous and cunning ploy, suspecting that he throws in a heavy dose of irony when he identifies himself with his Jewish kinsmen in Rom 9:1–5, listing Jewish prerogatives as if they mattered now. Such examples of Paul’s ambiguity, cunning, and deception, and others like them, are reason enough, says Given, to deconstruct the protective canonical and ecclesiastical veil that shrouds an innocent, guileless “Saint” Paul and to look unflinchingly at the real Paul, the sophistic Paul.

Given's project interweaves the disciplines of classics and biblical studies using the thread of a nuanced and complex view of rhetoric. Drawing upon deconstructions of the canonical view of "Saint" Socrates, Given likewise offers the theological guild a similar deconstruction of "Saint" Paul. Highly suggestive, sometimes brilliant in his proposals, Given nevertheless produces a fabric composed of a number of exegetical loose ends. In hearing echoes of Socrates' *daemon* in Acts 17:16, for example, Given notes that Socrates' form of divine leading "was a personal phenomenon not available to others" (quoting Ian Kidd). Yet in Acts the Holy Spirit motivates numerous people, not just Paul, whom alone Given singles out as the Lukan Socrates. Nor is it certain that the construction "his spirit in him" refers to the Holy Spirit. That Septuagintalism appears twice (not once, as Given says) in the LXX, in both cases simply meaning "he." Still, Given's reading of this verse is worth serious consideration. More problematic is Given's equation of Paul's "recruitment" strategy in 1 Cor 9:19–23 with deceptive rhetoric. Paul, we are told, engaged in "pretense" when he ate with Gentiles and refrained from food troubling to the "weak" ("food matters are probably meant"). Given even distinguishes this from the practice of Jesus, whom the Gospels portray "as one who associated freely with tax collectors and sinners, but [never] as temporarily assuming the identity of a tax collector or sinner in order to 'gain' tax collectors or sinners." Yet did not such "association" often involve table fellowship, the very behavior Given equates with "assuming an identity" in Paul's case? Perhaps that is why Given says, "I think the extent of his 'becoming like' goes beyond this minimal dietary example," though he offers no others. Given's reading of 2 Cor 4:1–4 is similarly questionable. He construes the "veil" over the gospel as something that either the gospel or Paul set in place, rather than as a metaphor used to describe the blinding activity of the god of this world, suggesting that it is "a slip of the tongue/pen" that provides a glimpse of the (real) sophistic Paul. Readers of *Paul's True Rhetoric* just may wonder whether Paul's alleged rhetorical cunning, here and elsewhere, is surpassed by that of Given himself.

Paul's True Rhetoric demonstrates a salutary methodological eclecticism and affords a number of insights into both Socrates and Paul. Given has read broadly and deeply and is a stimulating conversation partner especially for those interested in Paul and Luke-Acts, though missiologists and students of rhetoric may want to engage him as well. Footnotes rather than endnotes facilitate the conversation, as do a bibliography and an index.

STEVEN R. MATTHIES
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Mission: An Essential Guide. By Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi. Abingdon Press, 2002, 127 pages.

Upon first inspection two features of this book immediately stand out: 1) the title is very bold, and 2) the book itself is quite thin. The combination of these two elements has the effect of not only arousing the potential reader's interest, but also perhaps creating a certain amount of skepticism. After all, how can anyone possibly claim to provide *an essential guide* to the complex and often confusing field of missiology within the scope of only 127 pages? While this is the question asked before one actually starts reading the book, afterwards the reader is faced with a new question: how did he pull it off? Not only does Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi live up to the expectation created by the title he does that in a fashion that is uniquely creative. Not only does he provide an easy to follow guide through a field that could sometimes look like an academic labyrinth, he also gives a number of important new insights along the way, the insights of someone "who was missionized and who believes in mission" (11).

Like his uncle Eugenio's fishing net, which the author uses as a metaphor for the way the *missional hermeneutic* functions (69-70), Cardoza-Orlandi manages to bring together the different stands of mission throughout this book, describing both the problems and the challenges, giving both a critique and an affirmation. As such this book serves as an introduction to the field of missiology, but also a new perspective to those who have already been initiated.

In the introduction entitled *Objects and Subjects of Mission: A New Perspective* the author explains his own position of experiencing a double identity, "we have been the *object of mission* and we are *subjects of mission*" (12). This dual identity evidently enables the author to be free from the need of becoming involved in the unhelpful apologetics, which so often characterizes missiological writings. Instead Cardoza-Orlandi himself walks the proverbial *tightrope*, understanding both sides of the coin, by being involved in both the *transmission* and *reception* side of God's mission. Furthermore, the introduction contains some very important distinctions between the terms *missions*, *mission*, and *missiology*. It closes with a nicely summarized outline of the rest of the book.

In *Chapter One: The Captivity of Mission in North American Churches* Cardoza-Orlandi sets the stage of a North American church context that stands in need of a "mirror" in order to become aware of their own

contextualized gospel. The author emphasizes the value of “cross-cultural mission encounters” in helping Christians from both sides to critically assess their own openness or cultural captivity (18). He furthermore describes and evaluates some historical missional models, such as the *mission as an overseas task* model, the *efficiency model*, the *nostalgic model*, the *disappearing model*, and the *mission-is-everything model*. His example of how public water faucets when replaced by improved water systems could actually be detrimental to a community’s cultural cohesiveness (21-22) is especially apt in its critique of the *efficiency model of mission*. Finally he critically evaluates the importance of the *mission-in-the-West framework* as a way of addressing some of the previously held misconceptions.

Chapter Two critiques the *Christendom* legacy of mission as a “one-directional activity” of the church as it manifested *itself* in both Roman Catholic and Protestant circles. The author then underscores the *Missio Dei* understanding of mission as a Trinitarian activity in which the church is called to participate.

Chapter Three deals with the *Bible and Mission*. It dispels all Bible-as-recipe book type of notions, whether the interpretations come from the *center* or the *margin*. Despite the lessons learned from the *Hermeneutical* or *Interpretive Circle* model Cardoza-Orlandi argues that this model is still inadequate to deal with interreligious and intercultural encounters, because it “continues to be a method primarily *for* the Christian community” (54). He advocates instead for the *Missional Hermeneutic* model, which emerged as a “theological and biblical dialogue between biblical scholars and missiologists” (54). Looking at both the Old and New Testaments this model seeks to address the *Why*, *How*, and *What* questions of mission. In this chapter Cardoza-Orlandi makes it abundantly clear that Bible has much more to say about mission than that which has traditionally been derived from the “Great Commission,” for instance. When read comprehensively the Bible would have us reconsider some of our preconceived notions about mission.

Concerning the increasingly popular issue of mission theologies, in *Chapter Four* Cardoza-Orlandi argues along with Andrew Walls that good theology “is born where the Christian faith has vitality” (71). Furthermore he says that the church is in the *matrix of mission*, which means that the church is not only the subject, but also the object of mission, thereby “completely ‘covered,’ ‘embraced’ in God’s missionary activity, called to repent, change, and renew its missionary commitments and practice in the world” (79). The author concludes this chapter by synthesizing and reinterpreting the last section of David Bosch’s groundbreaking work, *Transforming Mis-*

sion, where the latter deals with the “ecumenical paradigm of mission.” Cardoza-Orlandi does a great job of reworking this section, which is possibly the most important part of Bosch’s book.

In *Chapter Five* Cardoza-Orlandi returns to what is perhaps his most provocative metaphor, “Mission as *Walking the Tightrope*”. Walking a tightrope is a risky business and the author relates how in the Acts 10 narrative of Peter and Cornelius both evangelizer and evangelized are faced with the prospect of losing old securities in order to gain something new from the Holy Spirit (90-91). The author narrates a couple of concrete examples of how the supposed givers actually become the receivers, and *vice versa*, in the borderline situations of “cross-cultural missional encounters”.

Chapter Six elaborates on the interdisciplinary nature of missiology. Thus, it is both a rediscovery of some old conversation partners, *Theology, History, Bible, and Worship Studies*, but also a discovery of some “new disciples”, *Anthropology, Religious Studies, and Economy*. Cardoza-Orlandi hopes that the integration of these latter disciplines with missiology will “*help eliminate the naïve approach of many among the people of God regarding issues of community development, health, environmental issues, and sound economic sustainability*”(107).

Perhaps the most beautiful part of this skillfully constructed monograph is Cardoza-Orlandi’s concluding statement of faith in mission. He consciously contextualizes this statement in his missiological identity of “living at the border” (111). His borderline experience is described as a series of trepidations and commitments that manage to skillfully negotiate the “tightrope” of faithful Christian witness.

Mission: An Essential Guide is a book that should be read and enjoyed by students, scholars, and Christian communities engaged in mission, alike. It is scholarly enough to be intellectually challenging to professional missiologists, on the one hand, but at the same time it is so user-friendly and practice oriented that it would be a great resource at the grass-roots level of local churches. As such it spans the gap between academia and the local manifestation of the global church, a major achievement in itself. Hopefully we will hear a lot more from Cardoza-Orlandi’s pen in years to come.

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The Kingdom and the Power: The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann. By Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz. Translated by John Bowden. Fortress Press, 2001, 262 pages.

In *The Kingdom and the Power*, Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz offers an accessible introduction to the theology of Jürgen Moltmann, which will be useful not only to those unfamiliar with Moltmann's thought, but also to those to whom Moltmann's theology is a familiar experience. Working chronologically, Müller-Fahrenholz proceeds systematically through each of Moltmann's major works, making reference throughout to the various occasional works Moltmann has published over the course of his long career. While not primarily a critical treatment of Moltmann's thought, this book does stop at points to raise important questions about problematic aspects of Moltmann's theology, and thus points to a number of issues to which Moltmann scholars (and Moltmann!) would do well to pay attention.

One useful contribution of this book is its close consideration of Moltmann's work prior to the publication of *Theology of Hope* in 1964. Müller-Fahrenholz spends an entire chapter considering the importance of Moltmann's early work, *The Community Against the Horizon of the Rule of Christ*, which Müller-Fahrenholz notes, "already contains important notions which are developed in the later books" (26). This is a helpful analysis that sheds light on some of the roots of Moltmann's later theological project, although this work itself was "without an echo" (36).

Müller-Fahrenholz divides Moltmann's project into two major stages. The "programmatic" stage of Moltmann's work begins with *The Community Against the Horizon of the Rule of Christ* and continues through his first three major publications: *Theology of Hope*, *The Crucified God*, and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. Although Müller-Fahrenholz is very positive about Moltmann's work in these books, he is not uncritical. For example, he writes that *Theology of Hope* seems "dated" to him (59), and he notes (perhaps incorrectly) "our distance from the concerns of that generation" (60). Similarly, he gives consideration to the critiques offered by Dorothy Sölle and others of *The Crucified God*, and asks pressing questions about the relationship between Moltmann's theology of the church and his approach to ethics.

Müller-Fahrenholz points to 1977 as the year in which Moltmann's theology underwent a shift away from the concerns of his "programmatic" writings and toward the themes of his subsequent "systematic contributions to theology." At this point, according to Müller-Fahrenholz, Moltmann under-

went a crisis as a result of criticisms lodged against him, particularly by liberation theologians: "Certainly he was not black, not a woman, not oppressed. But wasn't it enough to be 'pro-black,' 'pro-woman,' and 'pro-oppressed' to be accepted as a partner in liberation theology? Evidently not, or not for all. But why not?" (123-4). It was in seeking an answer to this question that Moltmann's second major period of scholarship developed.

Throughout this period, Moltmann continues to rely on the themes that motivated him in his programmatic period, but he enters into new dialogues, and considers the "classical" (136) questions of Christian theology in a more organized manner. Beginning with *The Trinity and the Kingdom* and continuing through his latest book, *Experiences in Theology*, Moltmann has continued this process of development and opened new lines of inquiry. He asks, for example, in *God In Creation* questions of ecology and the natural world, and in *The Coming of God* the more detailed questions of eschatology, such as the fate of the dead and the millennium.

The last two chapters are by far the most intriguing and instructive portion of the book. Having reviewed each of Moltmann's major works, Müller-Fahrenholz seeks to discern the golden thread that ties the whole of Moltmann's corpus together. He notes that on the one hand, "Moltmann develops his theology and offers it for discussion as a committed contemporary" (219). In other words, Moltmann's theology has to be understood as an apologetic theology in the Tillichian sense of an "answering" theology. It seeks to respond to the questions raised by the cultural milieu in which it finds itself and provide the answers implied by the Christian gospel. The significance of this contemporary aspect is carried forward, not only in more complex theological works, but also, as Müller-Fahrenholz notes, in "a whole series of books with sermons, addresses, and more popular discussions" (220). Moltmann's work always seeks to address the direct situation of the day and respond accordingly. His theology is thus broadly ecumenical and rooted in the concrete experiences of Christians around the world.

The other theme that Müller-Fahrenholz emphasizes is Moltmann's status as "comrade of the Kingdom." The theme that runs throughout Moltmann's work is his commitment to an anticipation of the reality of the Kingdom of God in the world. "Kingdom of God' is the basic symbol for the eschatological dimension which shapes his theology" (221). Moltmann's work emerges out of these themes and seeks to illuminate their significance for the church.

Müller-Fahrenholz finally considers the growing mysticism that can be detected throughout Moltmann's theology. Moltmann's theology is rooted in the practice of prayer, and, as Müller-Fahrenholz notes: "Moltmann also wants his theological talk about God to be understood as talking to God" (237). Prayer, as "inviting mystery" (237) is at the heart of Christian life, and thus should stand at the heart of Christian theology as well. Müller-Fahrenholz remarks that Moltmann's work stands in a tradition of mystical theology "which extends from Jacob Böhme through Friedrich Oetinger and Benedict Baader to nineteenth-century philosophy. Without it Moltmann's eschatological process thought would be inconceivable" (240). This is the root of the speculative character of much of Moltmann's work, and provides a means of understanding the utopian hope that continues to permeate Moltmann's theology.

This volume provides readers of Moltmann's theology a fresh and articulate summary and evaluation of Moltmann's thought from the perspective of an appreciative scholar. Müller-Fahrenholz offers readers a lens into the major themes of a major theologian, whose impact on ecumenical theology in the post-war period has been of great significance. One problem that emerges, however, is that Müller-Fahrenholz is perhaps *too* appreciative and not enough of a critic. He does not dwell at length on some of the important criticisms that have been leveled against Moltmann's Trinitarian theology, his utopian approach to social issues, and his Christology. Each of these issues has been the subject of often-heated discourse in the theological community, and while it is true that Müller-Fahrenholz addresses these critiques, he does not give them their full weight, nor does he provide an adequate defense of Moltmann on these points. His important insight into the mystical element in Moltmann's work may serve as a screen more than as a shield, covering rather than deflecting attacks.

This is, nevertheless, an excellent introduction to Moltmann's thought for those who have never encountered his work, as well as a needed refresher for those of us for whom Moltmann's theology is an old friend.

SCOTT ROBERTS PAETH
ALBERTSON COLLEGE

God and Globalization, Vol. 3: *Christ and the Dominions of Civilization*. Edited by Max L. Stackhouse with Diane B. Obenchain. Trinity Press International, 2002, xii and 347 pages.

While the possibility of a “common moral discourse” is one of the chief aims uniting this collection of essays, the reality of religious diversity is the major obstacle toward achieving it. Nonetheless, the central thesis of this four-volume project—that the predominant analytical framework guiding most analyses of globalization ignores the normative role of religion in cultural development—is unaffected by the existence of competing religious perspectives.

The very fact that every human culture manifests some form of religious worldview—defined by the editors as the capacity “however modest, to transcend its bio-socio-economic-cultural enmeshments by the reception of transcendent inspiration or an exercise of commitments and covenants beyond interests” (8)—warrants an analysis of globalization that recognizes some power beyond our socially constructed patterns of culture, economics, and politics as motivating human action. Consequently, an intellectually honest and comprehensive examination of the many forces categorized under the rubric of “globalization” demands an analysis that attempts to understand how particular religions in specific cultural contexts respond, resist, and adapt to the forces of globalization.

So far so good. Unfortunately, this much needed perspective within globalization studies is accompanied by another thesis (not necessarily shared by all the contributors) articulated by editor Max. L. Stackhouse that the (primarily positive) socio-cultural forces identified with globalization “were formed in societies fundamentally stamped by Christian theological ethics” (12). A corollary to this thesis is the affirmation that the negative forces associated with globalization, such as colonialism, imperialism, cultural hegemony, sexual exploitation, racism, and genocide, are not generated by (nor are they unique to) Christianity. Some logical consequences of these two affirmations include: (1) the belief that globalization is a positive and highly-desired reality, and (2) the claim that a Christian worldview (or a worldview sympathetic to the values and norms of Christianity) is therefore a more “evolved” or advanced perspective.

The editors recognize the negative consequences of globalizing forces while championing the positive. They are also aware of the criticisms leveled at Christianity for its complicity in perpetuating the more imperialistic and

totalitarian aspects of globalization, yet they suggest that the secularizing forces of the Enlightenment project that sought to “liberate” culture from religion became “the sources of more devastating forms of colonialism, imperialism, hegemony, forced migrations, patriarchy, slavery, conquest, sexual exploitation, and genocide than the world had previously known” (13). Consequently, the solution is not to remove religion from the public discourse, but to better understand how religion is not only affected by cultural, economic, and political forces, but is itself a force forming and transforming these other spheres.

Furthermore, by recognizing that globalization arose within a Christian theological-ethical framework, the editors do not mean to imply that Christianity is superior to other world religions. Rather, a fundamental presupposition of the essays included in this collection is “that something deeper than the religions themselves stands beyond every religion” (16), i.e., that which John Hick labels “ultimate reality” and which the world’s theistic religions name God. The goal of collecting these essays, representative of a wide diversity of religious perspectives, is not to postulate some abstract “religion in general” but to incarnate theological diversity in all its particularity and through that process recognize not only differences, but that which is held in common by most (if not all) world religions.

Perhaps it is unfair to evaluate the contribution this third volume of *God and Globalization* makes to the academic discourse on globalization solely on the basis of its shortcomings within the academic discourse on religious pluralism. Yet it seems that too many differences have been glossed over for the sake of “common human logic” (25). The fact that all the contributors engage world religions from a Christian religious perspective (though not necessarily an explicitly confessional stance), coupled with the fact that postmodern critiques that question the very possibility of a “common moral discourse” have been all but ignored, suggests an underlying commitment to a particular view of globalization (as those forces that generate capital, promote democracy, protect human rights, and encourage religious tolerance) that limits our definition of religion (as those beliefs and practices that foster the previously stated values). Arguably the chief question being investigated in this volume is not how to deal with the challenges of religious diversity (“Can we affirm all the great religions equally?”) but the more difficult question concerning the Christian assessment of other religions (“Is it the case that all religions are not equal when it comes to promoting the values that foster a global society?”).

Surprisingly, given that globalization is defined by the editors as “the fruits of the Christian impact on civilization” (56), the resulting picture of how Christianity interacts with other religions (while simultaneously contending with the forces of secularization) is remarkably open to difference and disagreement. The authors are not proposing a new Christian imperialism. A more accurate representation of their project is that they are exploring the consequences of one their guiding theses—that globalizing forces arose within a Christian theological-ethical context—by analyzing how other religions and cultures have engaged this “Christian” worldview (often manifest in highly secularized form). Sometimes the interaction with Western globalizing forces leads to approval and adoption, at other times the result is disapproval and resistance; the hope shared by all the contributing authors is that deeper engagement between different traditions will lead to a mutual appreciation of shared perspectives while allowing other perspectives to challenge, instruct, and even transform our own.

Overall, this third volume in the series provides a much needed corrective to the highly secularized academic discussion of globalization. While offering guidelines for trans-contextual conversation between different religious perspectives the authors do not reduce religion to generalized abstractions but respect the particularity of competing truth claims. The result is not an easy resolution to the challenges raised by religious pluralism, which are heightened by the forces of globalization that have reduced geographic as well as cultural distance, but a model for navigating difference that is open to the other *as other* while speaking from a position of deep personal commitment. The spirit of this work is best captured by the words of George Peck, quoted by S. Mark Heim whose book *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* has influenced many of the essays in this collection: “I have committed my life to Jesus Christ; *therefore* I am open to other religions.”

RUBÉN ROSARIO RODRÍGUEZ
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei. By Stanley J. Grenz. Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, xii and 345 pages.

In this first volume of a projected six-part series (*The Matrix of Christian Theology*), evangelical Baptist theologian Stanley Grenz (Truett Seminary and Baylor University), offers his readership an illuminating and wide-rang-

ing historical-exegetical investigation into the doctrine of the *imago dei*. The object of this work, as Grenz points out in his introduction, is the construction of a communal understanding of the *imago dei*, drawing from contemporary trinitarian discourse, in particular the insights of the social model, as a response to the postmodern eclipse of the self. By defining the *imago dei* as an anthropological, theological, ecclesiological and eschatological concept, Grenz has justifiably situated this book as the introductory primer to the subsequent volumes, which would cover theology, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology and eschatology.

Grenz begins by tracing the contemporary reemergence of trinitarian theology, initiated by Hegel's philosophical theology and decisively asserted by Barth, albeit within the analogy of the one divine subject. Summarizing the various contributions of Rahner, Moltmann, Pannenberg, LaCugna, and Zizioulas, Grenz points to the contemporary redirection of the doctrine away from monarchical, essentialistic conceptions to more egalitarian, personalistic models.

In chapters two and three, Grenz presents a panoramic survey of the rise and demise of modern Western individualism. Drawing substantially from the work of philosopher Charles Taylor, Grenz tracks the modern focus on the inward, "centered" self, seen in both the rationalistic and romantic variants, to its genesis in Augustine's mystical inward turn. In the rejection of the instrumental rationality of the Enlightenment by the Romantic Movement, the seeds were sown for the subsequent dissolution and death of the unitary self in the twentieth century. What the poststructuralist critique has left us with, Grenz avers, is a highly unstable, fragmentary self.

In chapter four, Grenz questions the common opinion that, in the history of doctrine in the West, there exists only two interpretive schemas in understanding the *imago dei* - the substantialist, structural anthropology of patristic-medieval theology and the dynamic, relational reconceptualization of the human person during the Reformation. He suggests that hints of a third option - Irenaeus' "telic" or eschatological anthropology, which highlights the developmental nature of humanity - can be seen in the work of the Scottish theologian James Orr, and in eighteenth century German dogmatists, like Herder and Dorner.

In the next two chapters, Grenz draws together a vast array of exegetical studies on the biblical notion of the *imago dei*, highlighting, firstly, the various creatiogenic interpretations of the creation narrative followed by the New Testament focus on Christ as the true *doxa* and *eikon* of God. This Christocentric anthropology, because of its "already-not yet" nature, inspires

hope in an eschatological *telos* which, in turn, gives impetus to an ethical imperative for the present.

Grenz returns to the Genesis narrative in chapter seven to expand on Barth's notion that an *analogia relationis* exists "between human relationality as sexually differentiated creatures and the relational God" (294), though God ultimately transcends all gendered descriptions. Because the *imago dei* is an eschatological concept, human sexuality is presently incomplete and as such, does not find its culmination in marital union, but in ecclesial being - "the person-in-bonded-community" (305). Grenz notes that a social-eschatological notion of the *imago dei* is corroborated by contemporary social psychology, and argues for its grounding in the perichoretic dynamic of the divine *agape*. Drawing from the rich sacramental ecclesiology of the Eastern theological tradition, Grenz concludes that the Church is to be the prolepsis of the eschatological *imago dei*, since its *telos* is *theosis* - participation in the divine life.

In his usual even-handed and careful treatment of the subject matter, Grenz has widened the practical application of present-day trinitarian discourse by critically engaging the anthropologies which are at the root of both cultural and ecclesial life. Grenz's censure of "the unified, autonomous, isolated human self," which was theologically motivated by the Western emphasis on the unity of God, is, without doubt, timely and proper (332). There are certainly gains to be made in formulating a theological anthropology which draws primarily on "a more appropriate social understanding of the divine reality" - that of perichoresis. However, this begs the question as to whether the rejection of Western individualistic anthropology necessarily demands the corollary denial of "the outmoded and helpful idea of God as the single divine subject"? It might be argued that unipersonal analogies of the divine ought to be retained in order to safeguard the aseity and independence of God in contrast to the contingent nature of humankind. Hence, one has first to ask whether psychological and social paradigms of the Trinity could not be utilized as mutually correcting concepts in order to affirm the antinomy of the Persons and the Essence? Secondly, if Grenz's intention is to treat the notion of perichoresis as a "root metaphor" to illuminate his concept of the *imago dei*, where are the limits of this concept when applied to the sphere of human relationality?

While we can profit by grounding different human loves, and to that end, our ecclesiology, in the coinherence of the divine life, the discontinuity be-

tween human and divine personhood must be addressed. There appears to be little disagreement that the idea of coinherence, as applied to both the divine and the human, is an extremely serviceable way of underlining the fact that personal individuation cannot be had apart from relationality. Where some clarification is needed is in the manner in which the circumincession of the divine Persons radically transcends the reality of mutually productive relations and, even, deep communion among human persons. Though humankind share a single essence and are multi-hypostatic in a way that is analogous to their triune Creator, the orthodox tradition has consistently maintained that, as human beings possess discrete wills and actions, this separates them from the Trinity, who has but a single will and operation. A social trinitarianism that affirms three distinct divine centers of consciousnesses, or the like, cannot escape the tritheistic charge; a communalistic theology is merely the alter-ego of, and thus no improvement over, an individualistic anthropology. Since Grenz explicitly privileges a relational, social trinitarianism over against a more unitary, essentialist approach, one wonders where he stands on this issue, as he does not appear to deal with it here.

In highlighting the eschatological nature of the *imago dei*, Grenz does the Western theological tradition a great service by reintroducing patristic doctrine of *theosis*. Though not entirely absent, as evident in the Reformers' notion of *participatio Christi*, the Latin Church has tended to emphasize, in their soteriology, the instrumental over the ontological. Despite this laudable inclusion, a few doubts remain. Is it possible to embrace the patristic notion of deification within a Western conception of the trinitarian processions without lapsing into either pantheism or tritheism? If there can be human participation in the reciprocal Love between the Father and the Son - the Spirit, who is "the concretization of the divine essence" (315), is the Church not drawn into the eternally essential unity and personal distinctions that are the sole prerogatives of divinity? On the other hand, if the redeemed do actually share in the very *koinonia* of God without participation in either the essence or personal distinctions, the divine Persons cannot be said to be eternally constituted by their essential relations, but only enter into intentional relations akin to that of human beings. If the Church has a real share in the eternal, divine *gloria*, which is neither a created reality nor the essential *perichoresis* of the divine persons, what of the divine do we participate in? Can Grenz affirm the patristic doctrine of deification, without also accounting for the Eastern distinction of essence, persons *and* energies, alluded to by the

Cappadocian Fathers, elaborated by Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus, and systematically defined by Gregory Palamas?

But these questions may fade into irrelevance in the face of Grenz's forthcoming sequels. In the meantime, his readers wait with eager anticipation.

SENG-KONG TAN

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Eschatology of the Old Testament. By Geerhardus Vos, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. P & R, 2001, x and 176 pages.

Geerhardus Vos, the inaugural holder of Princeton Seminary's professorship of biblical theology from 1894-1932, never composed a work on the Old Testament's eschatology. The bibliographical labors which produced the present volume showed that he had in fact undertaken the task, but the final product as it now stands is a synthesis of Vos's nascent manuscript, several of his other papers on the topic, and the syllabus and lecture notes from his class on Old Testament eschatology (p.vii). The editor has gone to the trouble of updating all Vos's bibliographic references, compiling a Scripture index as well.

An excellent introductory chapter opens the work, followed by two brief chapters that survey the field in Vos's day. The remaining half or so of the work studies specific epochs in biblical history (within Eden, before the flood, the Mosaic theocracy) or specific pericopes (Gen 49:10; the Sinai theophany; Balaam's oracles in Num 24; the promise made to the Davidic monarchy). Additional chapters are dedicated to the eschatology of theophanies and of the Psalter (the latter is not to be confused with Vos's article in *The Princeton Theological Review*, now reprinted elsewhere). Finally, a selection of stimulating excerpts from the sources used in preparing the present volume is offered in the appendix; these extracts will be particularly appreciated by those who have found Vos's other writings to be overly selective in biblical coverage.

Here as in his other writings, Vos employs the Reformed biblico-theological method of interpretation: he proceeds in temporal order (insofar as is possible) through the material, identifying seeds of "subsequent progressive revelation" and tracing their development (p.19). The introductory chapter (the longest in the work) applies itself to sketching the broad contours of individual and collective eschatology in the Old Testament. Hardly

a proto-Fundamentalist, Vos makes clear that he has no intention of putting words into Scripture's mouth by seeking a fully developed eschatology in the Old Testament; on the contrary, "it would be a perverse method to seek to prove from the Old Testament alone or chiefly that at the moment of death the pious Israelite went straight up to heaven" (p.8). Indeed, he concludes that in the Old Testament "the general outlook on death was a dismal one" (p.11).

Having said that, Vos also points out the exceptional instances of individual eschatology that are found in the Psalter. For example, in Psalm 16 Vos avers that the psalmist's confidence that God will not leave his soul in Sheol is not to be understood as mere assurance that the original author's life was to be spared. Rather, taking his cue from Peter's "veritable stroke of interpretative genius" in Acts 2:25-8, Vos sees the psalm as expressing "a general principle" which Peter applies to "the one case in which it could find an exhaustively perfect fulfillment," the resurrection of Christ. Vos concludes that in Psalm 16 "the prospect of death has not been removed..., but the state of death itself has been transfigured and become a prophecy of glory" (p.15).

It is in this manner that Vos, in the rest of the book, works his way through a variety of Old Testament passages. Addressing the issue of soul sleep terminology in the Old Testament, Vos points out the limits of the metaphor as prohibiting a "death-sleep," since "the sleeping of the dead was so-called because there was expected an end to it, sooner or later, through a resurrection" (p.28).

Vos's treatment of collective eschatology is valuable for a number of reasons, not least of which is his treatment of the New Testament's "transposition of [Old Testament entities] into a higher spiritual key," or what is often understood as spiritualization. Vos defends this practice by noting that its warrant derives from "the example of our Lord and his disciples." Indeed, he argues that the Old Testament prophets themselves (e.g. Jeremiah's treatment of the ark of the covenant, Jer 3:16) began "to see through the cover of earthly, material representation in which the institutions of the Old Testament were enveloped" (p.36). The interpreter's task, however, is not hastily to generalize the relationship between prophecy and fulfillment, but "to study carefully the principle on which the Old and the New Testaments both proceed in their discriminating treatment of the eschatological material...[and] handle the matter...in its large, broad aspects" (pp.36-7). This, in short, is Vos's methodology: to pursue the meaning of prophecy by focusing on "the

New Testament teaching in regard to [its] fulfillment. It teaches us that the form is cast aside and that the substance is brought to light" (p.119).

Readers of Vos's other writings will know that his insight often transcends the question at hand and suggests very fruitful lines of thought that extend throughout the canon. The present volume is no exception, as his reflections on the Mosaic theocracy show—indeed, they raise the possibility that Old Testament theology may exhibit an eschatological substructure similar to the eschatological framework which Vos sees in Paul's theology. Vos begins his discussion by noting the dynamic interrelation which obtains between a present reality and its future antitype. In Israel's case, "the theocratic structure projects its own character into the picture of the future" (p.117). This, if nothing else, accounts for the "ideal or unattainable" nature of some of its facets. In fact, Vos claims, the theocracy supplies much of the Old Testament's eschatological vocabulary. This actually became a problem when the eschatological fulfillment came, since the New Testament made a "distinction...between the substance and the form of revelation" by spiritualizing the perfection suggested by the Old Testament theocracy: "the holy city is center; offices, organization, peace...are there, but this is all to be eternalized in the messianic era" (p.118). Here the solution to the problem of discovering authorial intent is again guided by the New Testament, and applies to "unfulfilled as well as to fulfilled prophecies because the New Testament does not proceed mechanically...but enables us to fix certain general principles..." for interpretation (p.120). In other words, while not every element of antecedent revelation is explicitly picked up by the New Testament, the canon's structure and self-interpretation are sufficiently clear guides for thorough investigation of any eschatological passage.

Though dating back a number of decades, Vos's insights into eschatology (having only now been rendered accessible) are far less dated than their date of origin would suggest. Ironically, and to the editor's credit, it also may be the most easily read of all Vos's productions. Overall, *The Eschatology of the Old Testament* is of great value for understanding the essence of the subject as well as its wider interconnections with the rest of Scripture and theology. Those studying either testament, professionally or otherwise, will doubtless appreciate it.

DANIEL C. TIMMER
TRINITY EVANGELICAL DIVINITY SCHOOL

Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture. The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching. By Graeme Goldsworthy. Eerdmans, 2000, xvi and 272 pages.

Preaching is doubtless the venue in which Christianity most frequently comes to verbal expression. Despite its prevalence, however, only rarely does a congregation enjoy exposure to the majority of the canon, even over a period of years. Further, the small portions of the canon that are covered are often subjected to any number of differing, even disagreeing, interpretations. Graeme Goldsworthy, lecturer in Old Testament, biblical theology, and hermeneutics at Moore Theological College in Sydney, seeks to remedy this problem by advancing “a consistently Christ-centered approach” to biblical interpretation and application (p.ix). Given the problems just mentioned, and the unique challenge the Old Testament poses to Christian preachers, such a work is timely indeed.

Goldsworthy puts forward the essence of his “reformed and evangelical” proposal in the introductory chapter, which bears the unambiguous title “Nothing but Christ and Him Crucified.” There he questions the validity of the usual practices of ignoring the Old Testament, using it as a stockpile of examples of virtuous living, or treating it without explaining its culmination in Jesus Christ. Arguing that such methods are fundamentally flawed, Goldsworthy lays the groundwork for his method by contending that the gospel is central for Christians in two ways: in our own experience of salvation, whereby we are reconciled with, and come to know, God; and theologically, since “the mighty acts of God...are declared by the preaching of Jesus and his apostles to be preparatory for the person and work of Jesus” (p.6). The gospel’s centrality is thus holistic, and the rest of *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* unfolds how “the way the Bible presents its message...that reaches its climax in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, provides us with the principles we need” for hermeneutics and homiletics (p.7).

Goldsworthy builds his hermeneutic by demonstrating how the gospel event provides essential unity to the canon while preserving and even bringing to full expression its diversity. He reviews the troubled discussion of biblical theology from Gabler until today, and argues for a synthesis of the often opposed synchronic and diachronic methods, one that will use New Testament insights in dealing with Old Testament texts in their original lit-

erary setting. The core of Goldsworthy's hermeneutical thesis is articulated in a chapter entitled "Was Jesus a Biblical Theologian?" He answers this question affirmatively, reasoning that because the New Testament shows Jesus to be the fulfiller of all Scripture (Luke 24:44-47; John 17:12) and the one who ushered in the kingdom of heaven in the fullness of time (Mark 1:14-15), "the meaning of all the Scriptures is unlocked by the death and resurrection of Jesus" (p.54). This hermeneutic is also seen in the apostles' sermons in Acts (Acts 2, 7, 13).

The second portion of *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* works out the theoretical argued in the first part. Goldsworthy dedicates a chapter to each of the various canonical genres (Old Testament narrative, law, prophets, wisdom, and Psalms; Old and New Testament apocalyptic, gospels, and Acts and epistles) and lays the homiletical groundwork for a representative sampling of such texts using the hermeneutic defined earlier. After determining the genre of the text, Goldsworthy examines the pericope's theological function in its epoch (e.g. the institution of the Davidic monarchy) "in terms of its theological contribution to the overall kingdom revelation." For example, while the united monarchy reveals in a positive manner "the nature of redemption and the kingdom of God, the period after Solomon's apostasy is negative." The latter, therefore, "reinforces the covenant sanctions of judgment" (p.104). In both cases, the interpreter should move forward through prophetic eschatology to the fulfillment of that theological function, and of the text's meaning, in Christ.

Applying a text's meaning to individuals is a challenging step in the homiletical process, but Goldsworthy once again adroitly draws on the centrality of Christ in Christian theology and experience to facilitate proper contextualization of the text's message. Once the theological function of the text itself is known, "the corresponding theological function in the person and work of Christ...is identified as the point of contact with our contemporary situation," and the text's bearing on the believer is "deduced on the basis of what the New Testament says about our relationship to Christ" (p.114). Here the guiding principle is that "the only thing that controls the matter of the relationship of the text to us is its prior relationship to Christ" (113)—hardly the usual line in homiletics, but canonically justified and immensely helpful.

Because of Goldsworthy's stress on redemptive history, one might think that preaching from Proverbs, which lacks a clear date and offers only the slimmest of historical references, would prove unfruitful in his hands. This, happily, does not obtain. In treating Proverbs 8:22-31, for example, he avoids the superficial

typology which sees the text as a reference to Christ, “which of course in the Old Testament it isn’t.” Recognizing the complex literary nature of the passage, but guided by its canonical context, Goldsworthy suggests that wisdom “is not a divine personification like the Egyptian *Ma’at* but rather a metaphor for the place of wisdom in the planning of God for the shape of the universe.” He suggests two avenues for applying the text to Christians: first, “the order established by God in creation is that which can make for order in the lives of God’s people;” and second, “while this passage . . . is not about Christ directly, it certainly foreshadows the role of Christ as the wisdom of God in creation (Col 1:15-17)” (p.189). The final chapter offers helpful suggestions for how to preach biblical theology, whether in a single sermon or a thematic series.

Christian preachers of varying theological persuasions will find this book valuable for the elegance, simplicity, and canonical robustness of the hermeneutic it establishes and demonstrates. Goldsworthy has made a very strong case for giving Christ centrality and authority in both interpretation and application of the Bible. In addition to helping preachers cover the whole canon effectively, Goldsworthy’s Christ-centered method has the additional benefit of making clear to visitors “who just happen to be there [but are not believers] . . . what we are really on about” (p.124). The only weakness of the work is the brevity of its examples; while they are present in sufficient number, their terseness sometimes leaves small gaps between the text and the modern hearer. Thankfully the theory needed to fill in these practical lacunae is clearly presented within the volume, and the numerous helpful diagrams merit praise. Cogent in argumentation and fruitful in implementation (even for portions of Scripture deemed mysterious or irrelevant), Goldsworthy’s work will benefit anyone interested in ascertaining and applying Scripture’s meaning.

DANIEL C. TIMMER

TRINITY EVANGELICAL DIVINITY SCHOOL

Theology After Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology. By Dan R. Stiver. Westminster John Knox, 2001, xii and 257 pages.

Dan R. Stiver is presently Professor of Theology in the Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin-Simmons University. An Evangelical theologian, he formerly taught at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and first became known through his eminently readable and helpful *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story* (Blackwell,

1996). He is one of the emerging Evangelical voices in the conversation with contemporary philosophy.

The present book exudes an inter-confessional and non-partisan spirit. It attempts to fill a perceived gap in Ricoeur-studies, namely the absence of a comprehensive and integrative treatment of his thinking as a whole. Observing that most theological appropriations of Ricoeur's work have been done in a piecemeal fashion, Stiver believes that this has been the cause of a failure to tap into the resources which his philosophy as a whole promises for theology. This is a somewhat odd observation, since the present reviewer at least can find numerous examples of serious theological engagement with Ricoeur's oeuvre over the past thirty years. Yet the reader is led to believe that the presentation of the whole of Ricoeur's thought, which is what Stiver attempts, will provide the necessary holistic prerequisite to any serious interaction. From the very beginning, Stiver seems to aim for "a bridge too far," for discovering the unity of one's thought is a difficult, not to say impossible project, as Stiver himself acknowledges.

The aim of the book is to propose Ricoeur's philosophy as a timely aid for contemporary theology. Ricoeur's thought is integrated in the transition from modernity to postmodernity and is itself ridden by some of the contradictions attaching to this exodus from modern certainty and clarity. One such contradiction is Ricoeur's too radical separation between his theology and his philosophy, a stance which Stiver interprets as essentially modern. His project undertakes the recovery of this implicit relation between Ricoeur's theology and his philosophy.

The so-called hermeneutical arc provides the conceptual key to the integration of the whole of Ricoeur's philosophy. The two arcs, hermeneutical and narrative, are integrated with the latter folded into the former. This means that each moment of the hermeneutical arc (first understanding, explanation and post-critical understanding) contains two elements of the narrative arc (configuration and re-figuration). In effect this relieves the anxiety that Ricoeur permits moments which do not already presuppose interpretation and appropriation. There may be some debate that Ricoeur's hermeneutical arc should not be interpreted in an overtly sequential fashion. Ricoeur's whole point was not that of separating the moments of understanding, but of revealing its holist character.

Upon creatively appropriating Ricoeur's arc into a "re-figured arc," Stiver turns to some of the major themes of his philosophy. He offers a less subjectivist or idealist reading of Ricoeur's work on metaphor and the surplus of

meaning (Wallace, Vanhoozer). Next Stiver describes the French philosopher's work on the various forms of discourse present in the Scriptures which is a welcome alternative to the privileging of the modality of narrative. Following is an appreciative analysis of the critical tools present in Ricoeur. The promise of his philosophy is that he finds a genuine middle way between objectivism and relativism, showing that critical thinking, the search for truth, reality and reference are still possible in late modernity. Another chapter describes one of Ricoeur's latest books, *Oneself As Another* and in terms of Stiver's proposal it is disappointing. The whole point of offering a comprehensive analysis of Ricoeur's work is that new works by him are now available which make possible the integration of his thought. Yet no such illuminating information is deduced from these texts. They do not shed new light on the earlier texts, nor contradict them, but simply follow them through and reinforce them. The final chapter attempts to draw all lines of inquiry together in Ricoeur's epistemology, which is a hermeneutics of attestation. Here he emerges as integrating a strong account of reality, reference and truth with a sense of the contextual nature of knowledge.

This has been a very readable and intelligible book. It will best serve as an excellent introduction into the thought of Ricoeur. But it hasn't delivered the serious engagement between theology and Ricoeur's philosophy that was expected. Unlike other books in the "Theology After..." category, the theological consequences have not been thoroughly explored. There have only been isolated discussions of some of the theologians which have engaged with Ricoeur, but not a systematic development of themes. Stiver also fails to converse seriously with critics of the surplus of meaning such as Vanhoozer and Hirsch or indeed Stout, although he does correct some misunderstandings about Ricoeur. Speech act theory is too hastily dismissed as compatible with his emphasis on actions as texts, rather than the converse. Its difference and the challenge it presents for Ricoeur is not recognized. Ricoeur's ontology is uncritically likened to that of critical realism, while following through Ricoeur's thought leads beyond alternatives such as realism and idealism.

The overall verdict is that despite its promises this book does not contribute anything new which has not been already intimated by those already engaging with Ricoeur's seminal work. Yet it does give a sense of the numerous theological vistas which Ricoeur opens and in this sense we hope it will play its part in leading theology in a more fruitful direction.

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